

THE MAGAZINE OF CINEMA & TELEVISION FANTASY Nº 45 70p

STARBURST

FULL COLOR
PREVIEW OF
CONAN

AUSTRALIAN FANTASY CINEMA
COMES OF AGE WITH
MAD MAX 2

PLUS FEATURES ON:
ALLIGATOR, DEADLY BLESSING,
SWAMP THING, THE CREATURE
FROM THE BLACK LAGOON,
AND A STAR WARS POSTER GALLERY

AND A FIRST LOOK AT
**THE RETURN OF
CAPT INVINCIBLE**



MAD MAX 2



THE RETURN OF
CAPT INVINCIBLE

CONAN

STARBURST

Publisher: Stan Lee

Volume 4, Number 9

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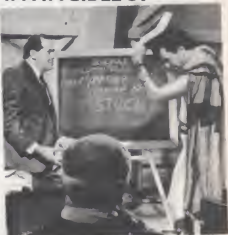
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STARBURST LETTERS

ATTENTION! GLARING ERROR

In your *Star Wars* article in issue 43 you have some inaccurate captions for the colour pictures on page 31. The Top 4 pics do not show the effects of a Rebel laser attack.

In fact this is a sequence from the Death Star's destruction of Alderaan. These channels of energy were situated around the huge circular dish (rather like a radio telescope's) that was the battle station's prime weapon. Activated, they formed a single focused beam, which splattered Alderaan all over the galaxy.

I suggest the clone responsible is flushed out the nearest airlock.

M. Bartrun,
Wymondham,
Norfolk.

What can I say? I was resigned to buying only American imports (*Cinefantastique* and *Cinefax*) till I found a copy of *Starburst* some months ago. Since then I've bought all the back issues I can find. *Starburst* is excellent, "Things I Come" is the best part after John Brosnan, double his salary, he deserves it!!

Flattery over, as part of my course I met Nick Alder at Bray Studio's just before Christmas, he was charming and I had a superb day. Coiled round his studio by the 36 foot snake from *Coram* whilst talking about this he showed me his photo's of the effects, sets, etc. it looks superb, conveying the atmosphere of Howard's hero beautifully dark, mysterious, but the centrepiece the hydrolically operated snake, it has extensible fangs a foot long, jaw pressure of 150 lbs, can lift Arnold 9 feet off the ground, it beats the previous *Laurentius* snake in *King Kong* into the ground. I was told the record for blood used was broken during *Conan*, some 280 gallons! (30 for the snake alone).

The reason I went was to find out about *Alien*, my favourite film (did you know the space Jockey and Mother Cornel were petrol bombed in America some months ago?). I would love to hear from anyone who has rare material on *Alien*, merchandise, stills etc. also anyone who is interested in forming an appreciation society based around the film its influences etc? if so could you write to my home address.

Jonathan Condliffe,
Doctors Cottage,
Bunbury Lane,
Bunbury,
Nr Tarporley,
Cheshire.

Thought you might be interested in the following cutting from the *Guardian* of 19.12, after your article "19 TV Wers" in *Starburst* 42.

J. Ward,
Wollaton,
Notts



ITV's Star Wars coup

ITV has bought the film *Star Wars* for £1,500,000. It will have its TV premiere in the autumn.

Star Wars was released in Britain in the summer of 1977, and has since taken £150 million at the box office worldwide, making it the largest grossing film ever.

The film was offered to ITV by 20th Century Fox for \$3 million and was immediately snapped up.

The winner of Oscars and numerous other top film awards for its special effects, it was one of the few blockbusters still available for TV screening.

As 20th Century Fox did not put the film up for auction, the BBC was not invited to make a bid.

The last big TV film deal was made by the BBC — which paid £4,400,000 for *Gone With The Wind*, part of a package with 55 other

Above: *Indiana Jones* (Harrison Ford) and *Marion Ravenwood* (Karen Allen) in the Lucasfilm epic, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Correspondent Peter Hardy believes that the success of the film was due to repeat viewings, a trend which was set with *Star Wars* and seems to be the secret of super-success in the cinemas.

I was very pleased to read your review of the film soundtrack *Escape From New York* by John Carpenter in issue 42 of *Starburst*.

I feel that the musical score to a film plays a very important part in creating the perfect atmosphere for the cinema goer and John Carpenter realises this when he produces his excellent film soundtracks. His inventive way of using synthesizers in contrast with his films is unique and I feel that had Carpenter not decided to score his own films then maybe we would have lost some of the impact and suspense inherent in his movies.

I hope you will continue to review some of the excellent atmospheric soundtracks that are being released and I look forward to reading the next 'Record World' feature.

Andrew Waite,
Bradford,
W. Yorks.

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We regret that we cannot enter into correspondence with individual readers. There just aren't enough hours in the day!

I have a number of points to raise. Firstly John Brosnan asked how many people would go to see *For Your Eyes Only* a second time as they would with *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. I ask how many people have seen *Raiders* even once? I know it's breaking box office records, but none of my friends have seen it, and when I went to see it my fellow film goers besides my dad (who loved it. Probably reminded him of his childhood watching serials he never saw the end of) were 5 adults and two children! Perhaps the records are broken by Mr Brosnan and fellow reviewers seeing it hundreds of times.

Now *For Your Eyes Only*. While I don't think it deserved all the criticism it got, I must agree that it was short on plot and that Roger Moore is too old for the part. In fact the main purpose of this letter was to nominate two new applicants for the part Anthony Valentine from *Colditz* and Lewis Collins from *The Professionals*. There is one slight problem with these:—no one knows who they are in America but I'm sure Cubby Broccoli can get round this. If he wants a super-villain I suggest Tom Baker, which neatly brings me round to *Dr Who*.

Full marks to John Nathan Turner for choosing a new Doctor I would never have thought of, and making it work! Well done! Also I am glad to be informed that Mathew Waterhouse is leaving. It's enough to put up with people like him at school without having them on TV.

One last thing my friend would like to complain about the new emphasis in your magazine on horror films that never reach us her in Bradford.

Peter J. Herdy,
 Bradford,
 W. Yorks.

STARBURST RIVALS

Before I start, I would like to say how good your *Starburst* magazine is. There are only two other magazines that can match the brilliance of *Starburst*, and that is *(Photoplay)* and your magnificent equi to *Starburst (Cinema)* and not for-

getting the *Starburst* (Poster Mag) keep the good work up.

To get to the point why I'm writing. I was just wandering is John Carpenter considering a sequel to that magnificent film (*Escape From New York*). The reason I ask this question, is because I bought a *Starlog* magazine No 53 (only to give me something to read while awaiting for *Starburst* to arrive) and I

spotted the section which said:

Summer '81: Winner and Losers
 John Carpenter's *Escape From New York* did better than expected, opening in July soon after *Raiders*, but still ponting a good \$20 million or so, encouraging Carpenter and partner Debra Hill to consider a sequel.

And seeing how quick *Starburst* get hold of their Hollywood news, I was

wondering if you could enlighten me on this question. Maybe (Bill Warren) can solve it, seeing he has just reported on John Carpenter's (*The Thing*). He might know something we don't.

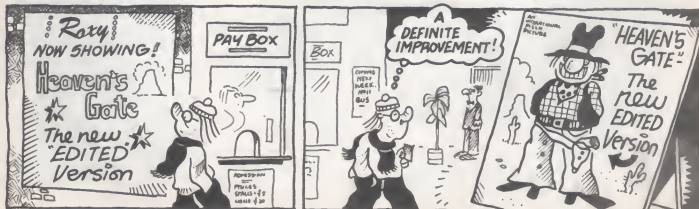
By the way that report about (*The Thing*) was the best part of *Starburst* 42.

Grent Bonard,
 Scunthorpe,
 S. Humberside.



Above: The production artwork from John Carpenter's forthcoming remake of *The Thing* from Another World. The latest is that the soundtrack music is to be written by Ennio Morricone and that stop motion work has been added to Rob Bottin's existing mechanical effects.

FLICKERS BY TIM QUINN & DICKY HOWETT



THINGS TO COME

FANTASTIC!

What's better than one super-hero like Clark Kent in his long-johns? Why four super-heroes, of course... otherwise known to Marvelites the world over as **The Fantastic Four**. They're headed screenwards in a movie scripted by Lawrence J. Block, and executive-produced by, who else but Stan the Men Lee. I've no other details for the moment—live action or animation, for example—except that the film is a definite go in the new roster of 39 movies to be part or fully bankrolled by the newly resuscitated CBS Theatrical Films. That's the cinema making arm of the CBS tv network in America. CBS have two movies currently shooting, and expect three or four more to kick off this year.

Also among their promised 39 projects (no one expects all of them to be made) are a **Betty Boop** movie, an intriguing Gary Goddard script called **Children of Merlin**... and would you believe, CBS are the only Hollywood company with guts enough to give Mike Cimino another chance. He's making **Nitty Gritty**. That just about sums up the state of his career and what's needed from him. In a hurry.

2001—11

It seems that we've all jumped the gun... Arthur C. Clarke has not even begun writing his promised 2001 sequel yet. "I've been thinking about it for fifteen years," he says. Once his latest globetrotting is over, he's due to start the book back home in Sri Lanka. "It will probably take me about three months. I can usually manage about a thousand words a day." And the film...? "I'm only doing the book. But Stanley (Kubrick) will have first option. Either film it will probably be unfilmable."

No matter. That's the only kind of movies Kubrick likes to tackle.

CHINESE RAIDERS?

George Lucas is a late entry in the Hollywood race to be the first filmmaker from the West to shoot locations on mainland China. That's the whisper out of San Rafael about the setting for **Raiders of the Lost Ark 2**. Negotiations with the Peking powers that-be have not begun as yet, although by now the Chinese film industry is much used to such overtures.

Otto Preminger made a fact-finding trip there some years ago in an effort to set up a movie about Canada's legendary Or Norman Bethune, who ran field hospitals during Mao's revolution. The Chinese, Otto found, were more interested in selling their own Bethune film to the West. They still promised him every possible co-operation, but then at least two Canadian productions based on the Bethune sage entered the scene and have since been claiming they'll shoot in China. David Carradine is planning to shoot **Kung Fu—The Movie** over there as well, and as I was saying

only the other month, the film that the first choice as Indiana Jones, Tom Selleck, is making, **The High Road to China**, requires Chinese locations—which is why John Huston was so keen to make it.

More recently, some Hollywoodians have shot some of the big Italian tv miniseries, **Marco Polo**, in China. A staggering experience reports the series star, Ken Marshall, due to headline Peter Yates' new fantasy film, **Krull**. Just the other week, the **Star Trek** movie director, Robert Wise, has been talking turkey (or chop-suey) with Peking studios about an East-West co-production of an East-West love story, **Our Destiny**. He left them with a print of his **Sound of Music** hit to mull over while making up their minds. He's due back in April for their decision, with a copy of **West Side Story** to further convince them, if necessary. (Either film is a better choice than his **Sand Pebbles** movie!)

So, as long as George Lucas takes **Star Wars**, **Empire** and **Raiders** with him on the trip, he might still pull it off and win the race. If not, he could always offer to buy China... or at least any of the dozen studios in Peking, Shanghai and Chang Chun. He'd certainly dig the budgets over there. An average Chinese feature costs only 399,000 dollars... and that includes the hundred release prints! Elstree-EMI, your days are numbered!

ON—AGAIN

Maybe, just maybe, 1982 is the year to see a film made of Alfred Bester's book, **Demolished Man**. Hollywood spies tell

me Oliver (The Hand) Stone has been toiling on yet another script and the movie is on the 'Gol' list of projects at the revived CBS Theatrical Films set-up. CBS is, of course, one of the three major tv networks in America; they're now making cinema movies again with James Caan in **River Rats**, and Sam Fuller directing **Let's Get Harry**. Described by some critics as a case of Oedipus Rex meeting The Godfather, **Demolished Man** covers a father-son relationship leading to a most Oedipal murder in the telepathic society of 2100 AD. Brian O'Palma had been keen to make the film version since the 60s and at one time nearly got it going in London. After **Carrie** and **The Fury**, De Palma wanted a respite from the psychic and hoped to get back to it later. He's lost out now—or so it seems to Ted Kotcheff. He's due to start demolition after completing **I, Robot**. But that's what we've heard about so many directors for years end years... I'll let you know.

KEVIN IN TOKYO

The Toei studios, all 18 sound-stages of them in Tokyo, were not quite what the main cast and crew were used to, but our wandering laddy Kevin Connor, still managed to complete his latest American movie, **Where the Evil Dwells**, in the 36 days his producer had planned. (Toei said it would take 90 days, reports the amused producer Martin B. Cohen. He's rather more amused to note the movie would have cost twice his three-million dollar budget back in Hollywood). Based on James Hardiman's book (not published

PARTICI-VEE!

Remember the scene in the film of Ray Bradbury's **Fahrenheit 451** where Julie Christie gets all excited because it's her turn to respond to questions asked by the characters of her favourite tv show...? Live! While she's at home watching it on her gigantic wall-sized screen. Science-fiction? Not a bit of it. Participation tv has already begun. In America, where else?

A cablevision two-play posed questions to subscribers and they responded by pressing Yes or No buttons at home. For instance a kid called Lulu was seen sucking her thumb as mommie set about making dinner. Up came the query: Does Lulu need a special talent? Yes, went the buttons. Cut—and Lulu is singing her head off. What should Dad's job be? The viewers were given a few choices to vote for and the majority voted Yes for clown. And that's how he was dressed when getting home from the circus... As for Mommie—well, the viewers had her working as a petrol-pump lady dressed in a chicken suit. (I said this was in America, didn't I?) Later when Lulu (growing up fast) was shopping in a supermarket, viewers were asked: Does this scene need some violence, a good chase or both? Both, punched the

yet), Evil stars Edward Albert (that's the son, not old man Eddie), Susan Green and Kevin Connor's old pal, Doug McClure, from his **Time Forged** series, mixed in with a Japanese cast who worked like mad, but stuck fast to Nippon traditions. The Jap men in the cast refused to take orders from Jap women—the two female interpreters used on the set.

As to the primitive studios' con-



Compiled by Tony Crawley

viewers and the mart was suddenly invaded by people in gorilla suits...!

And so it went on, with the director switching to his choice of pre-taped sequences to obey his viewers' whims. The show even wound up winning an Emmy for its novelty value. What...? Oh, what was it called? Well, that too was left up to the viewers at home. **The Saga of Lulu Smith or The Chicken Who Ate Columbus.** (The chicken won by a mile).

KIWI SF

In its race to catch up next-door Australia and make it in the international cinema scene, New Zealand movies are turning to futuristic fantasy. Harley Cokliss has been down under there to make **Battletruck** with Michael Beck and Kelly Johnson, the kid from New Zealand's biggest ever money-maker, **Goodbye Pork Pie**. And now I hear that Mike Worrell, who worked on **Flash Gordon**, has joined Auckland director Harry Long's team for the more definitive of number **The Last Tribe**. "It's an original script," says Harry, "about a battle for the future... taking place in the mind." Mike Worrell has just completed his models and other designs for the movie.



ditions, all of the 18 sound-stages had dirt floors, no toilets or dressing rooms on location sites, no chairs on the set and everyone, stars as well as crew, were ferried around by vans and buses, not cars. Having survived end won against these spartan odds, producer Cohen end director Connor are talking about a movie of **Flashpoint**, the British play by Tom Kempinski.

ARK VISION

The huge population of Tel Aviv has been able to watch **Raiders of the Lost Ark** on television already. And for free. No, it's not some hyped-up cassette offer. Nor a new cablevision service enticing new subscribers. It's nothing to do with satellite tv, either. It's more like an 80s' version of Radio Caroline and the like—a floating pirate tv station. The good ship *Odelia* (or bad ship, if you're a cinema manager or a film distributor) has been transmitting brand new movies within a day or two of them opening in town. As most of the films are complete with Hebrew sub-titles, it's obvious someone has been making pirate video-tapes from the cinemas' mini-prints. So far, no one knows who. (Indy could find out!) The Israeli government is being pressed into reedying a new law to ban such manoeuvres... while the Tel Aviv film people are after more rapid action. Like hiring some heavies for a swift, Entebbe-like raid on the raiders of **Raiders**. Oi vey!

Swedish police are also hunting out the makers—well, tapers—of pirate cassettes of both **Raiders** and **Superman II** which have been "flooding" the market in Stockholm and other major Scandinavian cities. The copies are said to be top-notch in quality. Well, of course. They were made, it seems, in Britain. Bergins, then, at about £25 a throw.

BRADBURY VISION

Surprise casting of the year—no, more than that, it's a shock—is the news that

big Pam Grier has joined the cast of Ray Bradbury's **Something Wicked This Way Comes**. Which is, unless you've forgotten it, a Disney movie. You couldn't ask for a more radical sign of the changing Disney times than to find such an exploitation B-movie glamour girl working at the home of M. Mouse. Personally, I'm delighted. It's about time Pam Grier managed to escape the ceaseless grind of blaxploitation thrillers all those gun girls in the Philippines and wicked ladies in jail. Getting Pam was the idea; not of Bradbury (who has no objections either) but the film's producer, Peter Douglas, son of Kirk, brother of Michael. "What's the problem?" says Pete. "We needed the most beautiful girl in the world and we got her." In a dual role, at that. So have we, come Christmas.

QUICK TAKES

Star Trek (The New Motion Picture, no doubt?) opens in America June 4, around the crowded time of **Creepshow** and **Polettergeist**. None of 'em worry Sylvester Stallone. He's opening **Rocky III** then, too, and says "dis summa no udda movie kin lay a glove on it"... William Hurt altered his media states by starring in a live Stateside tv play with Sally Field... **Beneath the Planet of the Apes** director Ted Post has formed a partnership with Sam Peckinpah and producer Martin Cohen. Ted make their first outing: **The Preying Mantis**. I don't think it's Peckinpah Story... **Superman** and Bond man Tom Menkiewicz is writing **Vegas** man Robert Ulrich's new tv series—that's **Gavilan**, man!... Universal's **Darkroom**, a kind of **Night**

Gallery II, has finished almost before it started on US-tv. No wonder James Coburn is free for Broadway...

CARRY ON, COHEN

Herman Cohen always did have an eye for schlock. And I mean the schlockiest schlock around. John Landis even based his **Schlock** movie on one Cohen release, or escapee—**Trog**. Before that Cohen gave us **I Was A Teenage Werewolf** (1957), **Konga** (1961), **Black Zoo** (1963), and both **Berserk** (1968) and **Trog** (1970) starred Joan Crawford in her best Faye Dunaway impression... But now, and lord knows what divining stick he uses, Herman Cohen has surpassed himself. To kick off his new Cobra Media company, he's released a Thailand movie called **Crocodile**. A crock of garbage is more like it. Makes **Trog** look Oscar-worthy. The Thai cast, including one actor called Tiny Tim, is fractionally better than the special effects, which isn't saying much as the effect models appear to have been assembled off the backs of cereal packets, from the toys inside and even the odd sugar-puff or two, by a blind crew. **Crocodile** is, of course, a scallier version of **Jaws** and on a scale of one to ten, it hovers around the minus-77 mark.

Top left: The stars of the forthcoming **Lawrence Block** movie, **The Fantastic Four**, pride of the **Marvel** comic stables. Above: The title star of the **Harley Cokliss**, New Zealand filmed movie, **Battletruck**. Left: British Director Kevin Connor, who has completed his most recent movie **Where Evil Dwells**.



THINGS TO COME

NO MORE NON

Good news from France. Film censorship has been greatly relaxed by the new Socialist government. This means movies like *Mad Max* (yeah, the first one) and the even older *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and the late Peter Collinson's *Open Season* are off the banned list. Also freed: George Romero's *Zombie—Dawn of the Dead* and Bill Lustig's horrible *Maniac*. About time too, particularly when most of these have been selling well enough, and unrestricted, on cassette.

Such sex 'n' violence movies will no longer be banned out of hand and the various age-levels for movies have been changed. *American Werewolf in London*, for example, was available to above 13-year-olds only—that age-bar will drop to twelve. Adult movies, banned to under eighteens, will now read under-sixteens.

Where the tired old British Board of Film Censors could learn something is in the composition of the French state film review board which is a viewing committee, not a small, too select group of film examiners, with a Censor (the board's secretary) in overall charge. The French commission, 24 strong, used to be comprised groups from the film industry, the government and social, education and family organisations. From now on, the government section is dropped and replaced by young filmmakers aged between 18 and 25. At least a group representing the actual and main film-going public. Over to you, James Ferman!

on the network prime time, the syndicated version has a slight title change—such as *Jim Rockford Private Eye* or *Happy Days Again*. With 25 separate hours of Gil Gerard as Buck, plus six two-hour episodes of 'movies' (including the high-priced pilot, released to Euro-cinemas as *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*), MCA-TV are finding lots of buyers around America. Just like they did with their other unceremoniously junked show, *Battlestar Galactica*. The man who produced them both for Universal, Glen Larson, has since taken his act to 20th Century-Fox (kicking off with Lee Majors as *The Fall Guy*). He's not surprised by the local success of *Buck*. He knew there was a market out there—no matter what the NBC ratings told the men with the axe.

FLOPS AND DROPS

As if Disney's movies haven't had enough trouble, what with the immense flop of *Condoorman*, Johnny Hough's patched-up *Watcher in the Woods* has joined the Mike Crawford vehicle on the write-off shelf, at a cost of 7m. Not even Disney can win 'em all... Lord Lew certainly couldn't. His top flops (well, his whole production slate is full of them, so something's gotta come top) is *Raise the Titanic* which had a 36m budget and *Legend of the Lone Ranger* which cost 20m. The goodies like *On Golden Pond*, had to be hived off to Universal. So how come Universal have suddenly cancelled their planned summertime release of Grade's *Dark Crystal*? Has Jim Henson bought it back, perhaps?



Above: A scene from the forthcoming Kurtz/Henson teamup picture, *Dark Crystal*. Opposite top: A scene from *Les Diaboliques*. Opposite below: A portrait of George Pal, whose last project, *The Disappearance*, is finally under way. Opposite far right: Director Nicholas Meyer, who has helmed the *Star Trek* sequel movie.

AUSSIE CENSORS

The censorship situation in Queensland in Australia remains, however, stuck in the middle ages. It's the one and only down under state with its own film review board—five people who vet films after they've opened and can yank 'em out of the theatres any damn time they feel like it. Latest casualties have included J. Lee Thompson's *Happy Birthday To Me and Friday The 13th Part Two*. And for the wrong reasons, of course. They were classed as being too violent—not banned for being rotten movies. No wonder John Brosnan, Phil Edwards and John Baxter moved here.

BUCK'S BACK

Going on holiday in America this summer? Well, you'll find a lot of *Buck Rogers* on the local TV stations. Although it was kicked off the NBC network after one season or so, *Buck* is now earning the bucks in what's known as syndication TV. This is where the Tellyworld studios make their real money. Once a series has run its course, or lasted beyond five years, on any of the top three networks, it's sold off as a package to the smaller city or town TV stations (the equivalent of our local radio stations). If the series is still hot

MORE QUICKIES

Watch out for Hollywood's newest special effects group's work in Mel Simon's *Utopia* and Frankheimer's *The Equals*. Called Private Stock Effects, it's set up by Chuck Comisky, Ken Jones and Larry Benson... Old time cowpoke Clint Walker, Bud Cort (from *Harold and Maude*), tall Julie Newmar and Vadim find Cindy Pickett have all joined the Hudson Brothers' horror film send-up, *Hysterical*. Maybe it will be... *Superman II*'s music man Ken Thorne supplies the score for Kevin Connor's *Where Evil Dwells*... Another music manager) Bob Marcuccio tunes producer with an sf thriller, *The Silent Enemy*. Hope it's more original than the title—the name of Lawrence Harvey's 1958 movie about missing frogman Cmdr 'Buster' Crabbe... (The information you get in this column)... *The Shining* is a big hit in Egypt. But what do they know?... *Excellibur* cleaning up in Latin (and Latin America) countries, but a shock zero where such medieval magic is traditional, ie, the land of the rising Datsun... David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* leading lady (not Debbie Harry, she's a guest) is a Canadian actress called Sonia Smits... but don't say it if you're in a hurry...

MAJORS ATTACK

Like Lee Majors, Farrah Fawcett is due back in a new tele-series by the autumn. Lee should never have let her guest in his *Fall Guy* pilot show! Still, that'll mean an hour a week extra time to run the old cassettes of *Dark Star*...

FRENCH HOMMAGE

The French, as we know (don't we?) are just nutty about movies. All movies. Every genre. And from every country. Paris is swash with movies. Certain cinemas like to run tribute weeks of favoured stars or directors. They can, though, carry this to absurd ends. Witness the recent Persian month devoted in one hall to the films of David Lynch. All two of them... *Ersarheed* and *The Elephant Man*. Within 18 months, he should have finished two more. *Red Dragon*. And... *Dune*.

SPICED UP?

A funny thing has happened to British director Norman J. Warren's pre-*lessemoid* sci comedy, *Outer Space*, now that it's reached the Americas. It's a funnier. It's six minutes longer, too... Although the US title is now *Spiced Out*, would you believe?—the poor

excuse for a script remains the same: three female aliens testing man's sexual quotient. Over here, the deep, whiskey voice of radio-TV commercials voice-over star, Bill Mitchell, spoke for the alien machine's computer-cum-jukebox. Over there, comic Bob Saget has filled the Wurliizer with druggie and gay jokes, voiced by himself and Jeff Dehart. All of which explains why, three years later, the movie the British critics left well alone, is now reviewed as being suitable 'for the youth trade weaned on Benny Hill and Cheech and Chong gaps'. Now, if only Saget and Dehart could do the same with *lessemoid*...

THE OLD FIRM

With all this slash-dash horror movie stuff around, it's about time a genuine horror movie was made. That seems to be the thinking of Canadian director Max Fricther and his producer Claude Leger. They're chasing the movie rights to a 1950s' novel called *The Widows* by the old firm of French horrorsmiths Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac. What do you mean—who? Boileau-Narcejac books led to Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Les diaboliques* in 1965 and Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). Apparently both these directors tried to buy *The Widows* for filming, as well, but their

THINGS TO COME

efforts came to naught. Max Fischer, born in Egypt, ran his own studio in Amsterdam and worked with Henri Langlois at the Cinematheque Francaise in Paris. He's now settled in Canada (where he made *The Lucky Star* with Rod Steiger), and while awaiting the rights, he's penning his *Widows* script. "I've inherited eight old script versions of the book," he says, "but I plan to adapt my own screenplay directly from the book. Why disturb such a masterpiece?" (You listening, Mr. Kubrick?)



Carpenter's *Dark Star* closed the bleary-eyed proceedings. The *Battlestar Galactica* movie was slotted as a tribute to special effects man John Dykstra, who is lecturing at the university this spring. The real highlight of the show was running, consecutively, all the *Quatermass* movies that organizers Jeff Johnson and Janie Linsey could gather in. They got Piers Haggard's *Quatermass Conclusion* from Euston Films without much problem. They found *Quatermass Experiment* and *Quatermass and The Pit*, too, but less I heard—about a week before the marathon began—they hadn't located *Quatermass II*. Somehow, I feel sure they got it, though.

SPOCK VOTE

You will have heard about the great Trekkie debates in the United States, and all their petitions, insisting that Leonard Nimoy continue to play Spock in the new *Star Trek* movie. Well, they won, of course. Once finished with his television globetrotting, Nimoy picked his ears and got to work. Then started the rumours that his character would be... well, rubbed out in the film. A Californian TV show decided to test the populace. Viewers were asked to phone either of two numbers to say yay or nay. The results: 146,000 phone calls—92% of them insisting Spock must live.

No truth in the rumour that Nimoy and his chums supplied the 8% neys.

PAL'S PIC

The movie that the late George Pal always wanted to make looks like making it to the screen by the end of 1983. The project is the Philip Wylie novel, *The Disappearance*. Producer David V. Picker has pencilled it in as his first MGM movie.



SEQUEL QUICKIE

Producer Brandon Chase must feel he has a winner in his independent movie, *The Sword and the Sorcerer*, mentioned here some months back. Before it's even been seen by the paying public, Chase has set up a sequel with a bigger budget and locations in Denmark, Germany and Spain. Title? *The Serpent's Orb*. Conan won't be alone out there! (Stars at the first movie included newcomer Lee Horsley, well-built Kathleen Beller and our own Simon McCorkindale).

HUGO FIRST

One of those rare commodities, a good British featurette, *The Last of Linda Cleer* (over to you, anagram lovers) won a Golden Hugo award at the Chicago film fest. Well, of course it did. It may have been commercials director Bob Mahoney's cinema debut, but he chose an expert crew. His cinematographer was *Excalibur*'s Alex Thomson, with Peter McDonald operating the camera—and Pete was one of the three second-unit directors on *Empire Strikes Back*. In all, the 33-minute affair cost 150,000 dollars (budgeteers please note). And just to make this story complete, since winning at Chicago, *Linda Cleer* (Cinderella—did you get it?) still hasn't a British distributor.

FINAL TAKES

Time After Time men Nicholas Meyer is so busy directing *Star Trek II*, he can't direct the movie of his new book, *Confessions of a Homicide Pigeon*, as well. So that job goes to Aussie Gillian Armstrong, she who helped us first discover Sam Neill in *My Brilliant Career*... Now it's official, by the way, *Raise the Titanic*, the turkey of the year '81, lost 14 million dollars... Sybil Denning fans will be delighted to know she's due back soon in, and as, *Julie Darling*. They won't be so happy to learn her co-star is Tony Franciosa... Pet Wayne, The Duke's kid, has made his stage debut in Dallas, just to prove he's not really a Herrhausen trick model... Memo from Roger Corman: Watch out for his "very promising" new directors, Amy Jones debuting with *The Slumber Party Massacre*—and Alan Holtzman, now cutting his *Forbidden World*... Lee Meriwether, the one-time Catwoman, is turning producer, for a tennis star biopic... writer-director David Fisher making *Space Invader* from the sf book by brothers Albert and David Hill... *Mother's Day* horrorsmith Charlie Kaufman sending up *Deliverance* and those *Wilderness Family* movies with *The Outdoorers*... Seems like the tele-Batman Adam West has heard about the plans for a beeg new Bat movie. His own new flick is called *Rest in Peace*...

GEORGE'S GUY

New head man at Lucasfilm is Robert M. Greber. He joined Lucasfilm two years

ago as chief financial officer—doesn't it need more than one guy to count all those millions? He's now been promoted to president and chief executive officer for George's ten-year-old combine. George himself had been filling in those positions following the resignation of Charles Weber, who didn't fancy the move from Hollywood to San Rafael in northern California where George and now his whole damn shooting match hangs out. George remains chairman of the board. Naturally.

FRIDAY'S BOY

Director Sean Cunningham is officially a multi-millionaire because of *Friday The 13th*. He says he made that little horror for 506,000 and it has to date earned in excess of 32-million bucks. He can afford, therefore, to break away from his blood-letting typecasting as soon as possible. That's his plan once *A Stranger Is Watching* hits the screen. His next projects include an adolescent comedy, *Vision Quest*, and a modern Western, *Road Show*—by Robert Gatchell, author of *Scorsese's Alica Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. They'll have to be good. For me, Sean is a film-maker best summed up by his surname: Cunnningham. If his straight films don't make it, he'll hardly be on poor street. He gets ten per cent of the net profits on *Friday The 13th Part II*, the upcoming *Part III* and any more of the same. (And I do mean the same).



REUNION

Nostromo crew members Tom Skeritt and Yaphet Kotto are together again and *Striking Back*. No, sorry, *Alien* it's not... though produced by one. The ubiquitous Dino de Menta of *Flash/Kong*... what?... fame?

FINAL FLASH

And we've just heard from Hollywood—on John Carpenter's drawing board is a little thing entitled... *Halloween III*.

US CONT'D

Make way for another of George Lucas, John Milius and Randal Kleiser's classmates at the University of Southern California film school. His name is Chuck Braverman and he's been shooting shorts and mucho TV (pay-TV shows) while the other guys have been making features. So now he's joined them. Two years ago he bought the novel, "80 dollars to Stamford" by Lucille Fletcher (the author of the 1948 Burt Lancaster movie, *Sorry, Wrong Number*) and waited until he had time to film it. With storyboards galore, a script completed in eight weeks, and a cast of newcomers (including his brother Bart from the TV *Vegas* series), he's shot the movie as *Trust Me* in 20 days in New York. Well, he's in a hurry to catch up those other guys.

SF MARATHON

The genre mad students of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland have been at it again. Getting the staggers and bags under their eyes at the seventh annual science fiction marathon on their campus. Non-stop over 28 hours, they watched sixteen movies in everything from 35 to 70mm. *Capricorn* One opened the show in 70mm and the campus fave rave, John

Sharpen your pencils! Fill your pens with vitriol! Here we go again... Time for my annual headache. Compiling *The* chart and replying to all your angry mail about what's in it (and isn't) and how come, already... (We'll get to that later).

Welcome, then, to the re-styled *Starburst Fantasy Chart* of the Top 200 of our genre of movies in box-office history. Plus a new close (inter-brooding) relations in terms of style, influence and overall impact. (They're the ones you usually mean about).

First things first...

As prophesied late last year in *Things to Come*, **Empire Strikes Back** did just that and has snorkled *Jaws* out of second place at last. And look out *Bruce*! Not that far behind *Jaws* is *Raiders*, despite its lousy 8th position in Britain's 1981 Box Office Top Ten.

I never doubt if all today's figures are art calculated; add them to an inevitable re-release next year, and we'll probably see him whip into third place—making an incredible 1.23 for George's Lucas films. And damnit: for us, the youthful (and not so!) fantasy market sneered at by all the so-called knowledgeable film-makers and executives a matter of six or seven years ago.

And so, it goes without saying (so I'll say it anyway, as I did also in *Things* a while back—that column's title begins to make sense, huh?) Indiana Jones wiped the floor with *Superman II* and Jimmy Bond. Gave him his due. *Sup* also helped put Bond in his place (27th, to be exact) way, but why, behind *Moonraker* and even the 16-year-old *Thunderball*? The writing, hopefully, must be on the wall now for Roger Moore as 007. The series needs a younger heart transplant. Fast. In both actors and ideas. Above all in that little old thing known as a script.

If you don't believe me, Cubby Broccoli, look more closely at our Top Ten again. Two of them only were directed by men in their late middle age. Three of them were directed by Steven Spielberg, aged 35, going on 18½. When George Lucas asked Steve what he wanted to do after *Jaws*, he said quite simply, "I want to do a Bond film".

Enough comment from me. You'll find plenty more, terse, factual and otherwise, alongside each entry. That's called answering your letters before you write 'em (well, postage is so high, right?). It's also all part of this new style chart—based, as always, on the annually restructured computations published by the venerable show-biz Bible, *Variety*—without which, etc., etc., and much thanks... Their own chart is a guide only. Nothing wholly definitive. (There is still no mention of a single George Romero film anywhere in their eight-page double-column chart).

Here's my guide to the re-styled *Starburst* chart:

MONEY. Apart from the Top Ten, we've downgraded the importance of the finance. It's there, in every listing, but obliquely stroked in among all other pertinent information. We're not against saying which film made what—without some figures, the chart would be impossible. We are saying that the actual positions of our movies are more intriguing than the money reason why. We're also underlining any film-maker's ancient beef that, given that the various studios and distributors charge so many overheads (publicity and advertising is merely one) against box-office takes it is damn near impossible to know how much any movie made any more.

Our figures, again from *Variety*, are not the box-office take, simply the "rental" percentage of those (North American) takes which is paid over to the distributor. Double these figures and you have a rough guesstimate of a film's global business.

FILMS. A lot of old favourite complaints have been zapped out of the chart this year. Not because I necessarily agreed with your arguments about their inclusion. More simply because with a batch of new films to be integrated in every year, some of my admittedly more questionable selections could be safely snafu. (We don't want to get into a Top 250, do we?) (Peease!)

Prime target in this chart-clearing was Disney. Various of the cartoons and the studio's more thinly disguised or just plain crass, kiddy-fantasy stuff have been wiped off the slate. So no more flubbers, shaggy dogs, world's greatest athletes. Even old Herbie is gone. I've retained the real Disney high-spots and yes, they still include *Darby O'Gill* and *The Little People*. Not because it's one of Spielberg's favourites, nor due to my Irish blood—simply to honour its quite astonishing effects. (Besides, I like it, too, Steve).

Also sadly pruned is much of Hitchcock. Goodbye to *Notorious*, *Spellbound*, *Man Who Knew Too Much*—five in all. His real biggies remain. So, of course, does his all-pervading influence on a score or more of the other entries. The late, great Sir Alfred, himself, continues to outdistance all other directors in the chart with six films to his everlasting credit.

Apart from Spielberg, Kubrick and De Palma (four each), it's the travelling British directors who keep turning up the most: close on fifty times in the 200 movies. That's people like Michael Anderson, Lewis Gilbert, John Guillermin, Guy Hamilton, Johnny Hough and Terence Young.

FANTASY

And while being unashamedly chauvinistic, all the more so when remembering this is read in America, I should also point out that five of the Top Ten giants were Made in Britain!

This is a fact which escapes most Stateside "critics" and "informed" show-biz commentators and it annoys the hell out of the London technicians who toiled so magnificently on the *Star Wars*, *Superman*, 007, *Omen*, *Monty P.* and now (what's due as) the *Raiders* series. Not forgetting *Alien*, *Outland*, *Savage 3*. (Yes, well, perhaps we had better forget *Savage 3*, if only in memory of Lord Law...)

POSITIONS. As I've junked so many previous charties, it would have been a nonsense—outside the Top Ten—to give

last year's positions. But in case you're checking on the whereabouts of your own particular fave from 1981, all new entries are in bold type.

Okay, over to you now. Hopefully every entry provides all the necessary facts, figures, surprises, maybe even shocks, for you to discover among yourselves and, as I always suggested—and your welcome letters tend to agree—help settle or indeed start rows galore. It's all here then. The box-office fate of two hundred of the kind of movies we've always been about. And now the rest of the world is, too. They're a bit late, but nonetheless welcome.

Have fun...



BOX OFFICE CHART

Compiled by
Tony
Crawley

A new order for the TOP THREE of our Fantasy Chart and cinema history.

1. (11) **STAR WARS** (director George Lucas) 1977 Last year's American re-issue earned a further 8.3m dollars, add the 5 sale to this and Luke & Co have now busted through the 200m hyper-finance-space \$185,138,000
2. (3) **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK** (Irvin Kershner) 1980 Again, a re-issue added millions (14m) and as Lucas batters any re-sales, future re-runs could push Empire beyond Star Wars in a year or two \$135,209,000
3. (4) **JAWS** (Steven Spielberg) 1975 First time Bruce has slipped from No 2 spot since the Lucas film put it there in 1977 \$132,435,000

BEST OF TOP TEN and history positions

4. (-) **RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK** (Steven Spielberg) 1981/15th in history after *Breathless* \$90,434,000
5. (4) **THE EXORCIST** (William Friedkin) 1978/8th in history, 5th last year, so it goes \$88,500,000
6. (5) **SUPERMAN II** (Richard Donner) 1980/16th now after *The Godfather* \$82,500,000
7. (6) **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** (Steven Spielberg) 1977/11th after *The Sound of Music* and the CEK co-producers *The Sting* \$77,000,000
8. (-) **SUPERMAN II** (Richard Donner) 1981/15th in the annals after *Gone With the Wind* (circa 1939), *Saturday Night Fever* and *National Lampoon's Animal House* \$64,000,000
9. (7) **STAR TREK: The Motion Picture** 1979/21st after *Kramer vs Kramer*, *Smokey and the Bandit II*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Star 80* and *R & S* \$56,000,000
10. (8) **JAWS II** (James Cameron) 1978/24th in box-office history after *Rosie* and *George Lucas' American Graffiti* \$55,608,000

BEST OF OUR TOP TWENTY

11. **THE TOWERING INFERNO** (John Guillemin) 1975/towering at 50m
12. **AIRPORT** (George Seaton) 1970/45.3m /the sequels don't come near
13. **THE POSSEIDON ADVENTURE** (Ronald Neame) 1972/42m /not here
14. **AIRPLANE!** (Jim Abrahams, David and Jerry Zucker) 1980/46.8m /runnel
15. **ALIEN** (Ridley Scott) 1979/26.8m/time for a 1, hem?!
16. **YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN** (Mel Brooks) 1975/38m /cos Mel wasn't in it
17. **KING KONG** (John Guillemin) 1976/36.9m/or five times the original
18. **EARTHQUAKE** (Mark Robson) 1974/36.3m/well, it was that kinda year
19. **THE AMITYVILLE HORROR** (Stuart Rosenberg) 1979/25m /sequel due in '82
20. **MOONRAKER** (Lewis Gilbert) 1979/23.9m/budget: 20m of 1m all

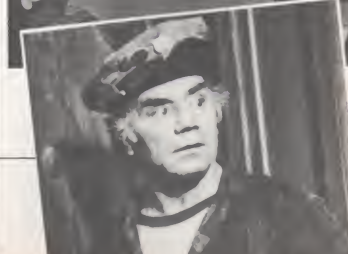
AND 30: ON TO THE TOP 50

21. **THE SHINING** (Stanley Kubrick) 1980/20.6m /far better than deserved
22. **THE OMEN** (Richard Donner) 1976/25.54m /beats the sequel combined
23. **THUNDERBALL** (Terence Young) 1965/28.53m /took 14 years to beat it
24. **SNOW WHITE** (animation) 1937/26.7m /Disney's first cartoon feature
25. **THE CHINA SYNDROME** (James Bridges) 1979/26.7m /science fact?
26. **AIRPORT 1975** (Jack Smight) 1975/25.8m /Karan Black binds a winner
27. **FOR YOUR EYES ONLY** (John Glen) 1981/25.42m /Meyers loses steam
28. **THE BLACK HOLE** (Gary Nelson) 1979/25.42m /re-issues may help, but why?
29. **POPEYE** (Robert Altman) 1980/24.5m /not enough spinach
30. **THE SPY WHO LOVED ME** (Lewis Gilbert) 1977/24.3m /had the wrong Jaws
31. **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** (Stanley Kubrick) 1968/24.1m /the best, though!
32. **1941** (Steven Spielberg) 1979/23.4m /but it cost 27m you see
33. **GOLDFINGER** (Guy Hamilton) 1964/22.8m /most call it the best Bond
34. **LOVE AT FIRST BITE** (Stan Dragoti) 1979/20.6m /sheer Hamilton!
35. **FANTASIA** (animation) 1940/19.3m /not again this year
36. **DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER** (Guy Hamilton) 1971/19.8m /Sam's favourite?
37. **YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE** (Lewis Gilbert) 1967/19.8m /the Japanese one
38. **HIGH ANXIETY** (Mel Brooks) 1977/19.1m /Mel should write not act
39. **HALLWEEEN** (John Carpenter) 1978/19.5m /chapeau budget to far
40. **FRIDAY** (13th) (Steven Soderbergh) 1980/17.1m /no comment!
41. **EXCALIBUR** (John Boorman) 1981/17.1m /worth the waiting for
42. **AIRPORT '77** (Jerry Jameson) 1977/16.2m /Lennon squirts high
43. **FLASH GORDON** (Mike Hodges) 1980/16.1m /yet if Ring had made it...?
44. **A CLOCKWORK ORANGE** (Stanley Kubrick) 1971/16.1m /he'd see it again
45. **THE MAMMOTS** (Terry Gilliam) 1981/16.1m /his is the UK UK yet!
46. **LIVE AND LET DIE** (Guy Hamilton) 1973/15.85m /Roger's first
47. **CLASH OF THE TITANS** (Desmond Davis) 1981/15.8m /Harrison's a best?
48. **PLANET OF THE APES** (Franklin J. Schaffner) 1968/15m /the first
49. **ROSEMARY'S BABY** (Roman Polanski) 1968/15m /William Castle a biggie
50. **CARRIE** (Brian De Palma) 1976/15m /his finest film
51. **DRESSED TO KILL** (Brian De Palma) 1980/15m /... and his worst

FEEL LIKE GOING ON FOR THE TOP 100...

52. **CONAN** (Michael Crichton) 1976/14.8m /but Looker's the same tale!
53. **EXORCIST II** (The Heretic) (John Boorman) 1977/13.9m /trash
54. **THE LORD OF THE RINGS** (Ralph Bakshi) 1978/13.7m /jury still out
55. **OMEN II: DAMEEN** (Don Taylor) 1978/13.6m /deserved better
56. **CHARIOTS OF THE GODS** (Harold Ramis) 1978/12.46m /space oddity
57. **DRACULA** (John Badham) 1979/12.4m /Chris Lee must be livid
58. **ALTERED STATES** (Ken Russell) 1980/12.4m /or how William Hurt
59. **THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE** (Jim Sharman) 1978/12.21m /and nang
60. **THE FURY** (Brian De Palma) 1978/12.1m /or was this his worst?
61. **BUCK ROGERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY** (Donner Hebbel) 1979/12.01m /re-movie
62. **CAPRICORN ONE** (Peter Hyams) 1978/12m /a rare Low Grade winner
63. **THE ELEPHANT MAN** (David Lynch) 1980/12m /just a rare Linda movie
64. **AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON** (John Landis) 1981/11.6m /yawn!
65. **WHEN A STRANGER CALLS** (Fred Zinneman) 1979/11.4m /... hang up!
66. **PSYCHO** (Alfred Hitchcock) 1960/11.2m /or every Directors' School
67. **INVASION OF THE BOOYSNATCHERS** (Philip Kaufman) 1978/11.13m /nost
68. **20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA** (Richard Fleischer) 1954/11m /great
69. **THE FOG** (John Carpenter) 1980/11m /back to school, John
70. **MYSTEROUS MONSTERS** (R. Guenette) 1975/10.9m /poker in every pack
71. **THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE** (Richard Friedenberg) 1978/10.8m /... or two
72. **ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK** (John Carpenter) 1981/10.5m /not finished yet?
73. **HALLWEEEN II** (Rick Rosenthal) 1981/10.5m /there's an odd fix
74. **PROPHET** (John Frankenheimer) 1979/10.5m /looked more like '48
75. **ROLLERCOASTER** (James Goldstone) 1977/10.11m /quite forgettable
76. **MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN** (Terry Jones) 1979/10.1m /unforgettable
77. **FRIDAY** (13th) PART 2 (Steve Miner) 1981/10.01m /very minor
78. **BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS** (Jimmy T. Murakami) 1980/10m /Compass
79. **FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE** (Terence Young) 1964/9.8m /Jameson's favourite
80. **THE ISLAND** (Michael Ritchie) 1980/9.8m /Benchley's better with sharks
81. **ESCAPE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN** (John Hough) 1979/9.5m /take all sorts
82. **LOGAN'S RUN** (Michael Anderson) 1976/9.5m /... doesn't it though?

83. **THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN** (Jeanel Schumacher) 1981/9.5m /am/f-fy
84. **OUTLAND** (Peter Hyams) 1981/9.5m /up quit with the re-makes, already
85. **ORCA** (Michael Anderson) 1977/9.43m /Bo Derek's in there, *Somehow*
86. **MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN** (Guy Hamilton) 1974/9.4m /Enter Chris Lee
87. **HEAVY METAL** (Gerald Potterton) 1981/9.3m /Nice one, Gerald (Gerald?)
88. **WILLARD** (Robert Mays) 1971/9.3m /is it a rat of a movie
89. **THE FINAL CONFLICT** (Graham Baker) 1981/9.1m /Bye-bye Damien
90. **ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE** (Peter Hunt) 1969/9.1m /... & Larenby!
91. **ROLLERBALL** (Norman Jewison) 1975/9.1m /Jimmy Dean's 'win all
92. **AIRPORT '80** (The CONCORD) (David Lowell Rich) 1979/9.1m /big notice
93. **THE LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH** (Robert Amund) 1977/9.1m /through!
94. **BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES** (Tobor) 1970/9.0m /the second
95. **THE CAT FROM OUTER SPACE** (Norman Tokar) 1978/Disney who else?
96. **THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN** (Robert Wise) 1971/9.3m /stron is right



87 DARYL O'GRIFF & THE LITTLE RASCALS/Robert Stevenson/1956/9 3m/tearful
88 THE HOWLING/Joe Dante/1981/8 2m/great effects but Lands wins
89 SLEEPER/Woody Allen/1978/5 05m/Woody in his fun days
90 BLOW OUT/Brian De Palma/1981/8m/Blow out and so he should be!

INTO THE NEXT CENTURY—THE TOP 200

101 SILENT SCREAM/Denny Harris/1979/1 8m/Enter Barbara Steele
102 SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER/Sam Wanmaker/1977/7 7m/Singoid to me!
103 THE SWARM/Steve Allen/1978/7 7m/An impossible movie
104 PLEMY PLOT/Alfred Hitchcock/1936/5 5m/The Master's best film
105 GRIZZLY/William C. Grier/1976/7 4m/Jaws with paws
106 RETURN FROM WITCH MOUNTAIN/John Hough/1976/7 3m/Bette Davis & Chris Lee!
107 BEYOND THE DOOR/Dover Heuman/1975/7 1m/Exorcist, Italian style (!)
108 IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE/1977/3 5m/Not just lovely enough
110 BATTLESTAR GALACTICA/Richard B. Coyle/1976/7 1m/My rules
111 WESTWORLD/Michael Crichton/1973/7m/Tip-top robotics
112 RAISE THE TITANIC/Jerry Jameson/1980/6 8m/And it cost: 36m Bye Lewi
113 THE FINAL COUNTERDOWN/Don Taylor/1967/6 8m/gives it a bad name
114 SWORD IN THE STONE/Walt Disney/1963/5 5m/Maleficent, Disney style
115 TORN CURTAIN/Alfred Hitchcock/1977/6 5m/Julia Andrews didn't sing
116 FRENZY/Alfred Hitchcock/1972/6 5m/Just not in Britain
117 NORTH BY NORTHWEST/Alfred Hitchcock/1959/6 4m/ie classic
118 OF NO FURTHER YOUNG/1962/6 25m/Start of the Bonds
119 BLOW UP/Michelangelo Antonioni/1967/6 25m/All Blow Out wasn't
120 TIME AFTER TIME/Nicholas Meyer/1975/5 3m/ie mini-murder
121 THE HIGH AND THE MIGHTY/William Wellman/1954/5 1m/Aviator's Father
122 DRAGONSLAYER/Matthew Roberts/1981/6m/and more to come
123 PHANTASM/Don Coscarelli/1979/5m/Did he understand it?
124 METEOR/Ronald Neame/1979/5m/Could have been so much better
125 PROM NIGHT/Paul Lynch/1980/6m/In the Staghorn '81
126 SCANNERS/Dave Cronenberg/1981/6m/His biggest hit... he only lost it
127 RACE WITH THE DEVIL/Jack Starrett/1975/5 5m/Peter Ford vs Satanists
128 HANGAR 18/James L. Conway/1980/5 5m/UF0 rubbish
129 CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND/SPECIAL EDITION/Spiegelberg/1980/5 07m/mostly special ad
130 REAR WINDOW/Alfred Hitchcock/1954/5 5m/Very special indeed
131 ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES/Don Taylor/1971/5 58m/ie third
132 FANTASTIC VOYAGE/Richard Fleischer/1965/5 5m/and it was
133 BARBARELLA/Roger Vadim/1968/5 5m/Vadim's French fantasy
134 FLESH GORDON/Howard Zieff/1974/5 3m/more flesh than Vadim
135 THE CHANGELING/Peter Medak/1980/5 3m/Great Scott, by George
136 MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL/Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones/1975/5 17m/plenty of Cheese up
137 DAMNATION ALLEY/Kate Smith/1977/5 03m/Just mucked it about
138 KING KONG/Merian C. Cooper/1933/5m/rhino and one—right Dino?
139 THE BIRDS/Alfred Hitchcock/1963/5m/superb effects exercise
140 OR STRANGELOVE OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE BOMB/Stanley Kubrick/1964/5m/Cheers on escalator
141 THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD/Gordon Hessler/1974/singoid to me, III
142 THE REINCARNATION OF PETER PRUDD/J. Lee Thompson/1975/5m/ively
143 DEATH RACE 2000/Paul Bartel/1975/5m/Where are you now Paul?
144 HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME/J. Lee Thompson/1981/4 91m/Typed to death
145 MOBY DICK/John Huston/1956/4 8m/ther she blows just about
146 THE LEGEND OF BOSGY CREEK/Charles B. Pierce/1972/4 8m/creaking
148 JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH/Henry Levin/1959/4 7m/okay
149 ON THE BEACH/Suzanne Kravitz/1965/4 7m/ie end of the world
150 FRITZ THE CAT/Flash Bakshi/1972/4 7m/ie end of the world's movies?
151 FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN/Pul Morrisey/1974/4 7m/sometime dug it
152 WIZARDS/Ralph Bakshi/1977/4 85m/wizard, it wasn't
153 THE HOUSE OF WAX/Andre De Toth/1953/4 85m/wizard, it was in 3D

154 THE SENTINEL/Michael Winner/1977/4 82m/terrible next terror
155 CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES/J. Lee Thompson/1972/4 5m/south
156 WOLFER/Michael Wadleigh/1981/4 5m/and they're still biting
157 THE SPACEMAN/Alan King Arthur/Russ Mayberry/1978/4 4m/Disneysque
158 MARDIENNE/John Sturges/1984/4 3m/ie the of tale that came true
159 THE AWAKENING/Kira Newall/1980/4 2m/Chuck Heston and his mummy
160 THE BAD SEED/Mervyn LaFay/1956/4 1m/first of the kids-as-killers
161 WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?/Robert Alenich/1964/4 05m/Bette Davis vs Joan Crawford
162 BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES/J. Lee Thompson/1971/4m/with
163 SAN FRANCISCO/W.S. Van Dyke/1936/4m/first of the disaster movies
164 WIZARD OF OZ/Victor Fleming/1939/6 4m/Lucius set it in space
165 THE NUTTY PROFESSOR/Jerry Lewis/1964/4m/Jerryball 'n' Hyde
166 THE CHASE/MAN/Boris Sagal/1971/4m/Hester's best man on earth
167 STRAW DOGS/Sam Peckinpah/1971/4m/forrunner of slash 'n' dash
168 THE STEPPED WIVES/Bryan Forbes/1975/4 4m/new wives for old
169 FOOD OF THE GODS/Bert I. Gordon/1976/4m/no great feast
170 OBSESSION/Brian De Palma/1976/4m/Or Brian De Hitchcock
171 FUTUREWORLD/Richard T. Heffron/1976/4m/val cheapo sequel
172 THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU/Don Taylor/1977/4m/ie
173 PIRANHA/Joe Dante/1978/4m/blood and laughs, a howling
174 AVALANCHÉ/Correy Allan/1976/4m/avalanche—no I've just had one
175 THE EXTERMINATOR/James Cameron/1980/4m/terrible, sm how
176 SOMEWHERE IN TIME/James Swazey/1980/4m/tell him Matheson
177 GALAXY OF TERROR/B. Clark/1981/4m/third time worked: just
178 SATURDAY THE 10th/Howard R. Cohen/1981/4m/fourth Cornman in 4m slot
179 RUNHOUSE/Take Hooper/1981/3 8m/most in Cornman class
180 NIGHTWING/Arthur Hiller/1979/3 7m/love Story director goes bats
181 MAD MAX/George Miller/1979/3 5m/but just wait for it
182 TERROR TRAIN/Roger Spottiswoode/1980/3 5m/sportswooden
183 THE FIFTH RING/Howard Avedis/1980/3 4m/bird-lying in mental wards
184 FEAR NO EVIL/Frank LaRocca/1981/2m/just parts of horror themes
185 DEADLY BLESSING/Wes Craven/1981/2 85m/ie snake-in-the-bath one
186 GALAXIA/William Sachs/1980/2 85m/also poor Dorothy
187 SIMON/Marshall Brickman/1980/2 7m/attacking states for laughs
188 MY BLOODY VALENTINE/George Milhaud/1981/2 6m/Canadian blood
189 CONFORM/Charles Jarrold/1981/2 5m/no wonder Disney's worried
190 FADE TO BLACK/Vernon Zimmerman/1980/2 4m/bewilder of film buffs
191 THE HEARSE/George Bowers/1980/2 3m/slow and funeral
192 STAR CRASH/Luigi Cozzi/1979/2 3m/Stella Stars: once only Caroline?
193 BEYOND THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE/Ivan Adam/1979/2 1m/retard
194 THE CHILDREN/Mike Kaelin-Wallen/1980/2 1m/village of the damned weird
195 LOOKER/Michael Crichton/1981/2m/ouch a US RP, UK won't see it
196 DEATH SHIP/Alvin Karpis/1980/1 75m/shouldn't have left harbour
197 DON'T ANSWER THE PHONE/Robert Hamner/1980/1 75m/because
198 HE KNOWS YOUR ALICE/Arnold Mastroianni/1980/1 75m/in the audience?
199 WHEN TIME RAN OUT/James Goldstone/1980/1 75m/so did the script

and congratulations if you're still with me if I'm still with me we've made it...

200 THE CLONUS HORROR/Robert Fiveson/1979/1 81m/ie anyone saw the accident, I hope you're over it now

Footnote: Working in the wings, with million-dollar rentals and dust, some of them to move up a bit this time next year... see from Kevin Connor: Warlords of Atlantis and Meek Heat, Jimmy Huston's Fatal Exam, Oliver Stone and/or Mando and/or Rambo'de Ham, Franklin J. Schaffner (how the night have plummeted) and The Sphinx... and, of course, last year's No. 200, Sidney Hayers' offering entitled Satan's Playthings...

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Feature by Phil Edwards

With sequels and remakes currently swamping the cinematic marketplace it was inevitable that somebody would think of filming a new version of the great-granddaddy of all sf movies, **Metropolis**. That such a feature should come from India will come as a shock to many. The arrival of the following press release at the **Starburst** offices was greeted with a certain amount of amazement. We have taken the liberty of reproducing this extract, verbatim.

From Clive Patel, Mowgli Film Productions, Inc.

I am first seeing the great Friz Lang masterpiece at the British Film Institute in London when I am attending the seminar on tax shelter situations in the Indian film makings. From that point on I know that I must be making this film for a new generations to enjoy its messages of the understanding and harmonious oneness with employers and employees alike.

It is my intentions to produce the most spectacular film made ever, both in terms of commitment emotional and the spectacular sets and speciality effects. My version of **Metropolis** will be making faithful to all Friz Lang's work. Though we will updating the look of the pictures, we have devised a method of recording the soundtrack in ultrasonics. This is beyond the range of human hearing. But though the film is sounding silent to the audiences, the aural information will registering with a subliminal level. It is the closest thing to telepathy a man can get.

metrop the future

The movie will be, same time, the great political statement and a spectacular vision of what we are calling **The Future Truth**. The title of the film will be then **Metropolis—The Future Truth**.

Patel's press release goes on to say that he is planning to negotiate with an ex-member of Industrial Light and Magic, Bill Ribbet who is French by birth. (See special effects panel).

Patel himself is one of the shadowy characters of world cinema. After some exhaustive research we can reveal that Patel is what can be called "India's answer to Lord Grade". Originally Clive "Ginger" Patel made his fortune selling frozen vegetable samosas in the sweat box cinemas of Bombay. From here he went on to found a small production company which was co-founded by his

mother. The tiny studio started making small budget romance features, long a staple of Indian cinema. Building his success slowly, Patel turned to bigger budgets and broader themes. His classic **The Water**, **The Plow** and **The Holy Cow** used as its basis John Ford's classic dustbowl drama **The Grapes of Wrath**. Though not widely distributed outside of India, the film has a reputation for being truly sensitive and much in the tradition of Flaherty's **Nanook of the North**. Following the success of **The Water**, **The Plow** and **The Holy Cow**, Patel turned his attention to the action genre and co-produced a Western, **The Last Round-Up**, with the Tasmanian Film Combine. Shot on location in Tasmania the film was warmly accepted at its joint premiere in Hobart and Bombay. Sadly for Patel, the film was picked up by an



opolis truth

exploitation company in America and released with a jokey soundtrack and extra 3D scenes added from **The Mask**. Those who have only seen this bowdlerised version can only guess at the sensitiveness of Patel's film, though of course the spectacular action scenes remain intact apart from the atrocious dubbing.

Patel is still looking at the cast for **Metropolis—the Future Truth** and comments in his press release: "I am thinking that what all the other science fiction films lacked was good acting. And this is one aspect of **Metropolis—the Future Truth** that we will be paying the very careful attentions to."

Though no names have been mentioned officially, those close to Patel know that the mogul is keen to go for star names. It appears that Patel doesn't agree with the "Hollywood



Far left: The only picture of Patel we could lay our hands on. It is about twenty years old and was taken when Patel was presented with the Golden Screen award for his services to cinema catering. The elderly man is Ramid "Bill" Singh, who at the time headed the Bombay Chamber of Commerce. Centre left: A scene from the original Fritz Lang film. Left: One of Bill Ribbet's technicians, Jo Enberg, sets up a special effects shot. Above: The original robot as played by Brigitte Helm.

Brat" philosophy of lesser-known actors and smart ensemble casting. Rather he prefers the older Hollywood idea of big stars make big box-office. Among the names being bandied about for the key role of Maria (the heroine of the story who is transformed into the robotrix) include Meryl Streep and Liza Minelli. For the small, but important role of Freder, the head of Metropolis, Patel has mentioned Marlon Brando. As his press release states, "Marlon Brando has not turned down the part of Freder."

The film will be made entirely in India, at the Mowgli Film Productions complex in Bombay. Around a thousand extras will be needed for the scenes of the city's workers at their toil. This presents something of a problem as the extras will be locals and

therefore Indian. To keep a uniformity of look about the actors involved in the film, Patel stated his intention for the stars to play their rolls in brown makeup. "After all," states the release, "by the year 2000 pollution will be so thick in the atmospheres that the population will be so thick in the atmospheres that the population of the world will probably be brown anyway."

The film is to be directed by Chas Phillips. A newcomer to the world of feature films, his previous experience includes a spell at the Corman film factory where he worked as second assistant sound recordist. Feeling that he was going nowhere fast, he broke away and shot a short called *Bimbo*, the story of a black pimp who undergoes a religious conversion when he discovers that one of his

girls is a reincarnation of his mother, who was the first black nun to be made a Mother Superior. The short received scanty distribution. There followed a brief period making commercials for American television. One such commercial for Joe McReady's used car lots, involved a black pimp who buys a car from the dealer and is so overcome with the dealer's kindness that he reforms. The timing and atmosphere which Phillips managed to inject in such a short time brought him to the attention of Patel.

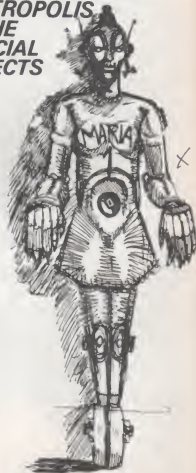
While the *Metropolis* remake was being set up by Patel, Phillips directed the as-yet unreleased *Winston Joseph, Space Pimp*. The story involves life in a bleak, space-oriented future where vice is a way of life. The lead character, Winston, turns over a new leaf



Above: A scene from the original production. Below: The meticulously crafted city which appeared in Fritz Lang's 1926 silent movie, *Metropolis*. Top right: Winston Joseph (Beverly Shepherd), takes time out in his sensory deprivation chamber in *Winston Joseph, Space Pimp* (1978). Above centre: A portrait of Shepherd as Winston Joseph. Above right: Director Chas Phillips, who helmed the *Winston Joseph* picture and will be directing *Metropolis* — The Future Truth. Right: An early production sketch for the new robotrix. Far right: An example of the work of matte painter Shamus O'Reilly. The first picture shows the city of *Metropolis* matted into a desert landscape. O'Reilly meticulously painted out the city because he was unhappy with some of the details. Examination of the second picture shows up O'Reilly's talent. You'd never know the city had been there in the first place.



Report by Alan Murdoch METROPOLIS —THE SPECIAL EFFECTS



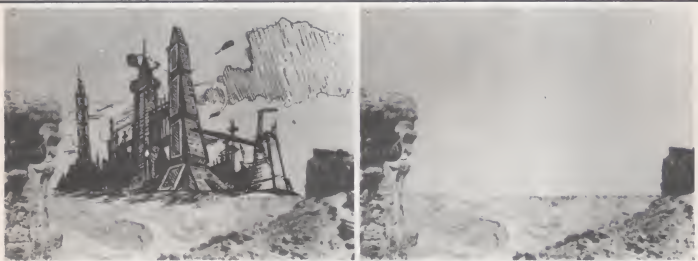
when his ship flies through a black hole and he has a religious experience.

Patel has cleverly managed to avoid the necessity of building the giant sets characteristic of the original movie by employing a series of glass paintings for the establishing shots. The paintings were executed by a discovery of Patel's, Shamus O'Reilly. Patel first met O'Reilly when the artist came to Patel's house to redecorate the living room. Patel was so impressed by O'Reilly's attention to detail that he hired the artist on the spot. O'Reilly has perfected a method of painting on glass with watercolours, which gives the glass painting a subtlety never before achieved in the process. Unfortunately, O'Reilly foresees problems when they come to shoot the

flooding scenes at the climax of the picture. He is concerned that the water needed for the scenes will cause the pigments to run and obliterate the paintings, though he feels that the visual effect of such an occurrence could be spectacular.

Metropolis the Future Truth should be in our cinemas at the end of 1982 provided that Patel can get the film past the Wardour Street distributors. He thinks his only problem will be that the movie does not contain lashings of gore, courtesy of Tom Savini, and endless murders of helpless, semi-naked young girls. "I'm saving that for my next film," comments Patel, "**Bloodbath in Bombay**."

We at **Starburst** think that we'll be hearing more of Patel in the future.



In charge of the special effects on **Metropolis—The Future Truth** is Bill Ribbet, the French-born technician who began his career at Industrial Light and Magic, the special effects arm of Lucasfilm. Ribbet began in a lowly capacity at the company, his main duties involving the sweeping up of the plastic kit parts used extensively in spaceship model-building. But the youngster had kept his eyes open and learned much. His effects knowledge, coupled with his brilliant management capabilities led him to convince other technicians to leave ILM and form a new company where they would have more freedom to choose assignments.

As a priority, Ribbet set about developing a more sophisticated version of the optical printer used by ILM. An optical printer is a device used to optically combine two pieces

of film into one piece and is necessary for the super-imposition of spaceships inot starry backgrounds. The ILM machine has four optical heads rather than two. This means that four pieces of film can be combined into one simultaneously. Ribbet's machine is even more impressive. It has 64 heads, meaning that it can combine 64 pieces of film onto one in one pass. The device was built at a cost of 2½ million US dollars. "Unfortunately," comments Ribbet, "Ginger has decided to use glass paintings instead of optical work, which makes our optical printer unnecessary. A shame, really. It's quite a technical achievement."

Another area in which Ribbet became involved was in the construction of the robot duplicate of Maria. "We felt that an electrically operated robot, especially when

used in conjunction with our human stars, would be dangerous because of all the water on the set for the flooding scenes. So we developed a highly sophisticated clockwork mechanism to make the robot move. We're having a few teething troubles. The machinery only runs for 15 seconds, which means we have trouble with long takes, but otherwise it's working out fine."

How about the huge machines operated by the workers of **Metropolis**? "Ah," says Ribbet darkly, "I can't tell you much about those right now. But they do involve a completely revolutionary process which I've taken the liberty of calling Ribbet-version. I think you'll be impressed when you see it. And if anyone can work out how those particular effects were achieved, we'll hire them immediately."

On the surface, *Alligator* may resemble the nth rip-off of *Jaws* but fortunately there's a lot more to it than that. Rather than being a rip-off of *Jaws* it's more of a homage to the monster movies of the 1950s, like *Them!* and *The Beast from 20,000*

Fathoms (the sort of films which, of course, provided the inspiration for *Jaws* in the first place), and one that also manages to be intelligent, witty and refreshingly original. It may be just an exploitation movie but it's made with enough skill and talent to lift it above the general run of such films.

A bare description of the plot sounds deceptively hokey—a little girl's father flushes her pet baby alligator down the toilet but instead of being killed it flourishes in the sewer system and, thanks to the experimental hormones in the bodies of dead experimental dogs (secretly dumped in the sewer by the perpetrators of the illegal experiments) that the alligator eats, it grows and grows... until finally it's nearly 40 feet long.

When the odd leg or arm starts being fished out of the sewers the police get a little curious and so our hero, Detective David Madison (*Robert Forster*) is sent in with his partner Kelly (*Perry Lang*) to investigate. They have a close encounter with the alligator and Kelly gets eaten, which is embarrassing for Madison because this isn't the first time he's lost a partner.

At first no one believes his story about the giant reptile, especially not the beautiful young herpetology expert, Marisa (*Robin Riker*) who owned the alligator originally, but then a photographer gets proof and the hunt is on. In scenes straight out of *Them!* teams of police scour the giant storm drain system under Los Angeles but fail to locate the monster who has meanwhile erupted out through the pavement and is hiding in someone's swimming pool.

The efforts of the authorities to stop the alligator are all in vain, even when it invades a garden party being held by the evil owner of the experimental laboratory responsible for the existence of the giant beast. It kills the host (Dean Jagger, looking on his last legs even before the alligator arrives) and eats the mayor as well as several of the guests before retreating back to its sewers, seemingly invulnerable. But then our hero, Madison, tracks it down to its lair and with the help of Marisa blows it up...

It all sounds pretty average formula stuff, true, but it's the way that screen writer John Sayles handles this all-too-familiar material that provides both the interest and the entertainment. Sayles has the welcome knack of breathing new life into the oldest of cliché situations and characters and by doing so transforms what would otherwise be routine exploitation movies into something different, as he did with *Piranha*, *Battle Beyond the Stars*, *The Lady in Red* and *The Howling*.

In *Alligator* he even succeeds in making that most trite of horror film conventions—the romantic relationship between the hero and the inevitably young and pretty lady expert—seem almost believable. After first appearing to be a one-dimensional stock character Marisa actually becomes a real person (well, almost) complete with eccentric mother and deftly touched-in background.

But some of the credit for the whiff of reality in her relationship with Madison must go to Robert Forster's convincing performance as the scruffy, neurotic detective as well as to the script. Forster is very good indeed in this—much better indeed than he was in his two previous genre movies, *The Black Hole* and

Alligator



This spread: A selection of scenes from the John Sayles scripted monster movie, *Alligator*.

The Darker Side of Terror (and he's come a long way since his debut in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* where he appeared to be very embarrassed in his role of Marlon Brando's fantasy object).

Apart from making clichés seem fresh and original and being able to make stock characters sound like real people John Sayles' other main asset is his sense of humour. Like his other movies mentioned above *Alligator* is permeated with black comedy: from the opening shots of an alligator wrestler having his leg almost chewed off while the watching crowd presume it's all part of the show to the sequence where the little boy is made to walk the plank, by his playmates, into a swimming pool and falls straight into the yawning jaws of the waiting reptile. Even the mandatory explosive ending has its funny side—a woman parks her car right on top of the manhole through which the hero plans to make his escape before the time bomb goes off.

Another enjoyably sick joke involves the muck-raking journalist who enters the sewer (appropriately enough) to prove that Madison was lying about the alligator but instead ends up as a snack—as he struggles in the reptile's jaws his motorised camera automatically records the action, prompting someone to comment later: "What a

professional! He actually photographed himself being eaten alive!"

One of the funniest sequences has Henry Silva, he of the cold eyes, guest-starring as big game hunter brought in to track down the beast. Prowling the alleys in full Big White Hunter uniform he even hires a couple of street wise black kids to act as 'native bearers' (needless to say he ends up as yet another snack).

But tongue-in-cheek humour aside *Alligator* remains basically a horror movie and director Lewis Teague, who made the excellent *The Lady in Red*, comes up with some effective shock moments, particularly in the sewer sequences (as the film's promo-line goes: "Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the sewer..."). Working with resources that were obviously not abundant Teague has produced a stylish-looking movie that compares well with the more expensive horror films that have been appearing recently. Even the special effects involving the alligator look pretty good, with skilful editing managing to conceal the shortcomings in the effects budget.

Alligator is definitely one exploitation movie worth catching up with. Among all the cheap-sleazy horror films that are around at the moment, like *The Burning*, *The Beyond*, *Hell Night* and *The Bogey Man* it stands out like a jewel in a... well, a sewer, of course.



CONAN

Alan Jones interviews Edward R. Pressman, producer of the forthcoming Conan movie.





The long awaited film version of Robert E. Howard's sword and sorcery character **Conan** is finally with us. And no-one is more relieved than its producer, Edward R. Pressman, who is responsible for producing Brian De Palma's **(Blood) Sisters** and **Phantom of the Paradise**, surprisingly saw the film late last year at the cinema in Nairobi. "But without music and with long stretches where the film went black. It was a showing to qualify it for tax purposes but even in the form I saw it in, the film did ten times the amount of business in Kenya that **Raiders of the Lost Ark** did". Seeing the Africans turn out in droves must have been a heartening experience for Pressman as the **Conan** project represents nearly eight years of his life.

"It all started when Oliver Stone came to me with the idea of doing a film based on Howard's creation which would star the former Mr. Universe, Arnold Schwarzenegger. He wrote a script that was absolutely brilliant but would have taken 70 million dollars to make". Stone, who directed the cult horror film **Selma** and, more recently **The Hand** for Pressman, won an Oscar for his screenplay for **Midnight Express** and in the earliest draft of the **Conan** script took into account many of the aspects of the early years of Conan's life and the Howard stories which dealt with this period as well as developing new themes of his own. Almost immediately the problems started and most of the difficulties Pressman has encountered on the project were with clearing the literary rights. Robert E. Howard had created the character for the 1932 'Weird Tales' story **The Phoenix on the Sword** but several other writers have carried on the anti-hero's exploits, like L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter and they wanted a slice of the lucrative rights too. This problem was eventually solved by forming a syndicate to represent the various parties. The other problem was with the many shifts in personnel that the project has undergone. "John Millius was always my first choice as director but when he pulled out to direct his pet project **Big Wednesday**, I spoke to Ridley Scott who seemed quite keen to do it but he kept changing his mind". Other directors that have also been linked to the film are Alan Parker, Ralph Bakshi and even John Frankenheimer but when the project stalled once again at Paramount, Millius came back into the picture with what would eventually be a fourth draft.







Above: As-yet unseen in Britain, Dino De Laurentiis' *Conan* movie stars Arnold Schwarzenegger as the Cimmerian warrior. Below: A bizarre reptile woman who appears in the film.

script and, unexpectedly, he also brought with him Dino De Laurentiis with whom he had a prior commitment. "But I wanted to see the film get off the ground as I had been working on it for so long. I was a bit dubious that our original concept might be interfered with but I put my faith in Milius' perseverance and I know for a fact that he has been able to more-or-less do what he has wanted because of Dino's personal family tragedies". What about the rumour though that De Laurentiis was cutting out most of the violence? "Well that isn't quite true. Although one particularly gory head severing scene has been cut, which incidentally didn't look that good anyway, the violence is being cut down rather than being cut out. For example 20 seconds is too much whereas 5 seconds is just right. The only real

problem I noticed when I saw the film is that the story has still yet to be properly told. Enough footage was shot but they just have to get it right in the editing".

The film itself began shooting proper on January 7th 1980 in studios just outside Madrid and apparently utilised 49 sets including a miniature of the city of Shadizar. The director of photography was originally Gil Taylor but he was replaced after a short time by Duke Callaghan, the same photographer who worked on Milius' **Big Wednesday**. In the early days of the project the names of Ray Harryhausen and Jim Danforth were bandied around with reference to the special effects but obviously stop motion animation would have held up the completed film even more. So it was Nick

Allder of *Alien* fame who was employed to come up with the methods of decapitation and the devising of how Thulsa Doom, the evil leader of the Cult of Set, changes into a snake, and how to build the film's most spectacular effect, a 36 foot hydraulic python.

Amid rumours that Schwarzenegger's voice is to be dubbed and that his acting talent leaves a lot to be desired is the burning question—will *Conan* finally be the beginning of the long anticipated sword and sorcery trend? Pressman:—"Well I hope so. So many people have been in two minds about the film but after they have spoken to Milius, who is very eloquent on the matter, they seem to be won around to his way of thinking that it will be a masterpiece. I sincerely hope this is the case as I own the rights to five *Conan* sequels".



Review by Phil Edwards

Wes Craven is something of a notorious director. His first major film was a nasty piece of on called **Last House on the Left**, a movie so disgusting in its graphic depiction of humiliation, rape and murder that the British Censor has banned it to this day. **Last House** is one of the few films that actually almost convinces one that censorship can have its merits. Craven's next opus, **The Hills Have Eyes** proved a reversal of some of the themes of **Last House** and its EC style grue and gore made many fans for the young American director. **Hills Have Eyes** was one of the many early slash movies which owed its origins to Tobe Hooper's **Texas Chainsaw Massacre**.

With **Deadly Blessing** Craven has moved into a relatively untapped sub genre, the rural American Gothic horror tale. **Deadly Blessing** is the story of a group of religious zealots named the Hittites who still till the soil with plows, are given to wearing ill-fitting black suits, hold vaguely Mormon-like religious meetings and publicly punish wrong doers

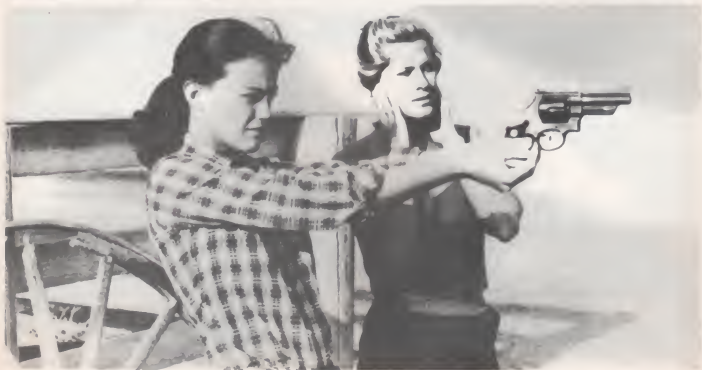


This spread: A selection of scenes from the Wes Craven directed horror movie, **Deadly Blessing**, which stars ex-Battlestar Galactica beauty Maren Jensen.

with a few lashes of a birch rod. Quite a splendidly threatening bunch really and being headed by Ernest Borgnine in a more than usually controlled performance, bring a properly threatening air to the film.

Part of the local community is ex-Hittite Jim (Doug Barr) who has married Martha, an outsider and the couple live in uneasy co-existence with the sect. Then, mysteriously, Jim is killed and Martha decides to stay on in the community. She is visited by two old friends, Lana and Vicky (Sharon Stone and Susan Buckner) who decide to stay for awhile to give her moral support. The arrival of these two nubile young ladies throws a spanner in the day to day lives of several of the Hittites and before long it becomes apparent that there is evil in the community as the body count starts and the terror mounts.

It would be easy to dismiss **Deadly Blessing** as little more than an elaborate stalk and slash movie, but this would be doing it a disservice. For starters Craven uses several of the devices of the splatter school but invests them with an inventiveness which transcends the genre. Much of **Deadly Blessing** takes



place in broad daylight and it is to Craven's credit that these sequences pack as much a sense of menace as the more traditional old dark house scenes. Unlike so much of modern American horror cinema, **Deadly Blessing** doesn't simply lurch from one set-piece to another with nothing more than bad acting to fill the gaps. Rather it develops a sense of unease from the opening sun-drenched scenes and gradually shifts to night time terror for the final revelation and confrontation with the killer.

There are several extended sequences of pure fright and with this film Craven demonstrates an ability to build tension and deliver a socko punchline in a thoroughly convincing manner. A scene in which Martha finds herself sharing a leisurely bath with a snake is particularly well handled as is Lana's experience in the locked barn with an unseen intruder. Farmyard inhabitants like snakes and spiders play a big part in **Deadly Blessing** and a dream sequence in which a spider falls into Lana's mouth rates highly on the Disgustometer.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of

Deadly Blessing is the mix of slash movie devices within a story that might or might not have super-natural overtones. Well certainly in the version now on release in this country. Originally **Deadly Blessing** ended with a DePalma-esque scene which firmly placed the film within a supernatural setting. The scene consisted of the appearance of a devil from under the floorboards of the house and it happens when it appears that the story has been brought to a more traditional close. Unfortunately the film's distributors, Barber International, felt that the scene was out of place and simply removed it. What Craven must think of this type of tampering can only be guessed at. From my point of view such an action by a distributor is unforgivable. Had it been necessary that the scene be removed by the censor, then like it or not it would have had a certain sense of acceptability and at any rate would have been inevitable. But to cut a scene, which incidentally cost US \$250,000 to shoot, on little more than a whim shows a disrespect for both the film maker and the potential audience. With this new ending—or lack of ending—it will be easy for people to

slot the film into the slash genre.

Interestingly the film was originally press shown with the full end sequence and it is this version which is carrying the bulk of reviews. It will be interesting to see the response of viewers who having read that there is a well directed shock ending dutifully visit **Deadly Blessing** only to find that the "shock" is Martha closing a door. Silly stuff, but it does give some insight to how film distributors still view their releases as so much product.

Deadly Blessing indicates that Craven may be breaking away from being an exploitation director of mixed talent to a film maker of considerable visual style. If the distributors ever decide to release **Swamp Thing** it may well prove that Craven is working his way into the second league of genre directors (Cronenberg, Carpenter, Romero) whose films are awaited with a degree of enthusiasm and expectation.

Deadly Blessing is no masterpiece to be sure, but it does make for an entertaining old fashioned horror movie, and amidst the whelter of slash and stalk gore, this is welcome indeed. ●



Rosemary's Killer is without doubt the most successful body count movie in the post *Friday the 13th Parts 1 and 2* era. We're on familiar ground once again with all the stock-in-trade elements like shower scenes, microcosms of college kids and, always my biggest gripe, illogicality, but under Joseph Zito's taut and atmospheric direction it all comes together in a neat, well put together package. Perhaps I was feeling more susceptible than usual but I covered in my seat and jumped a number of times. I think you will too.

Graduation Day at the Pritchard school for girls in Avalon Bay is the setting. *The Graduation* was the first title for the film that has since become *The Prowler* in America). It's the first graduation party to be held since 1945 as Major Chatham put a stop to the annual celebrations when his daughter Rosemary, and her boyfriend, were viciously murdered by her jilted lover who had just returned to Europe, and the war. The killer was never found and now years later, he reappears, dressed in the same sinister army uniform, and is prepared to kill as many people as possible to put a stop to the celebrations that have become a warped reminder of his past bitterness. It doesn't take a genius to work out who the murderer actually is but this really isn't important

anyway as the main attribute in the film is the masterful creation of menace. Zito pulls out all the stops to maintain suspense at a high level; dark shadows at the tops of stairs, camera movements behind the actors to suggest the murderer creeping up on them which of course are often red herrings, quick jolting cuts back to the assailant preparing for the kill—we've seen it all before but it works here, even if it could be considered the unsubtle way possible.

Once again the college kids are the typical cyphers found in this sub-genre but countering this is the excellent performance from Vicki Dawson as the heroine Pam McDonald, despite the fact that her policeman boyfriend, who should know better, constantly puts her at incredible risk.

Tom Savini is, yet again, on hand for the special make-up effects and although most of the murders have been slightly cut, it doesn't matter, as the hair raising shocks aren't dissipated one iota. Most jarring of these is the stiletto through the head emerging from the victim's chin. There is also a twist on the old throat slitting theme, as here it all takes place in the swimming pool. Underwater we see the air bubbles change from the mouth and mingle with the blood from the severed epiglottis. And very realistic it is too. Too realistic in fact, pretty soon we're all going to need University degrees in surgery to

appreciate Savini's future state-of-the-art gore. After Savini supplies an excellent exploding head for the finale, the tilting music starts as Pam goes back to her dormitory to find the last two bodies. But we've all seen *Carrie*, (and its imitators), too often to be fooled by this ploy and sure enough Joseph Zito pulls the carpet out from under our feet for one last time. However, I didn't feel cheated or taken for the usual ride by *Rosemary's Killer* as is so often the case with others of its ilk and that is why I'd like to see something else by Joseph Zito. He is definitely one to watch.

Rosemary's Killer (1982)

Vicki Dawson (Pam McDonald), Chris Goutam (Mark London), Farley Granger (Sheriff Fraser), Lawrence Tierney (Major Chatham), Cindy Weintraub (Lisa Kurtz), Lisa Dunstheath (Sherry Hansen), John Seitz (Pat Kinsley), David Sederholm (Carl), Bill Nunnery (hotel clerk), Thom Bray (Ben), Diane Rode (Sally), Brian England (Paul), Donna Davies (Miss Allison), Carlton Carpenter (1945 MC), Joy Glacum (Francis Rosemary Chatham).
Directed by Joseph Zito, Screenplay by Glenn Leopold and David Streit. Director of Photography: Reul Lomas. Music by Richard Einhorn. Makeup by Tom Savini, Edited by Joel Goodman, Special effects assistant Darryl Ferrucci, Produced by Joseph Zito and David Streit.
Time: 88 mins

Cent: X

ROSEMARY'S KILLER



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WILLIAM CASTLE

Feature by Arthur Ellis



This month we look at the biggest film that William Castle was ever involved in — Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*. Castle had become involved when the rights to Ira Levin's book, which he owned, were bought by Paramount Pictures. Castle was eased from his position of power and became nothing more than a figure head on the picture, with little say in the casting or in who would direct.

Two directors were privileged to read the galleys of *Rosemary's Baby*, William Castle and Alfred Hitchcock. It was Castle who bought the rights, for one hundred thousand dollars cash, an additional 50 thousand if the book became a best seller and 5% of 100% of the net profits.

Following the menace of *Sardonius* in 1961, Castle tried his hand out on a couple of non-horror and essentially, for Castle, non-gimmick movies which, although commercially successful didn't swamp any further desires he had to produce other horror pictures.

Straight-Jacket cleaned up at the box office in 1964. An axe movie featuring Joan Crawford, the average punter got the gist of the film's angle with only the slightest of glances at the poster: "From the author of *Psycho*, the director of *Homicidal* and the co-star of *Baby Jane*".

The Night Walker and **I Saw What You Did** followed. Both excellent films, both

performing pretty disastrously at the theaters. It seemed as though the bottom had dropped out of the usually dependable horror market.

Joining Paramount Pictures in 1966 he produced another 4 non horror movies, culminating in late '67 with the genuinely appalling *Project X*, in which he did for science fiction what *Hawk the Slayer* did for sincerity and style.

Then he purchased the rights to *Rosemary's Baby*, and soon thereafter got a call from Robert Evans, Head of Production at Paramount. "Evans wanted to purchase the book and suggested a meeting. But it was with Charles Bluhdorn, Head of Gulf and Western Industries and the owner, lock, stock and barrel of Paramount Pictures with whom Castle bargained.

* Like Castle, Evans began his career as an actor, taking the psycho lead in the first "X" rated western in 1958—*The Fiend Who Walked the West*, a transposition of Richard Widmark's establishing movie *Kiss of Death*.

It was agreed that Castle would line produce the movie version for a sizeable cheque and 30% of any eventual profits. It was also agreed that he wouldn't be directing, agreed from Castle's point of view reluctantly and with some suspicion. Paramount wanted Roman Polanski, and their persuasive tack of "With his youth and your experience..." led Castle to accept a token right of director approval. Token because whether William Castle wanted Polanski or not, Polanski would get the job.

From this moment on one gets the feeling that Castle was being used solely because he had the rights to a book that Evans wanted. His involvement in the picture seems more for reasons of diplomacy and compromise than for anything which could have enhanced the creative elements of the film.

With his independency intimidated and somewhat over-ruled by the corporate structure, Castle's chores took a background seat. In spite of the fact that the finished film

sported "A William Castle Production" it was Evans who appears to have had all the major final words. He dictated the budget, the director had already been pre-ordered and it was he who had the last word on casting. The first meeting with Polanski must have been laced with attrition for Castle, and feeling slightly soiled by having to resign the directing of the film to someone else, his dislike of the much younger Polish film maker rose to a peak the moment Polanski walked into the office.

He declined to sit down and glanced continually at his own reflection in the mirror in Castle's office. Coming across as "cocky and vain" Castle was all for making the meeting brief and getting rid of him. After Polanski outlined his intentions of filming the book straight, minus the visual trickery style of the day, which he disliked (but which Castle had certainly helped establish), the two of them began to get along a lot better. The meeting lasted a couple of hours and by its end Castle had discovered Polanski to be "brilliant and wonderfully receptive."

Shooting began at an excessively sluggish pace in New York. In seven hours only one, apparently simple set had been taken, and this was later re-shot at the end of the schedule. Castle discovered something else about Polanski—that he was a perfectionist and unsympathetic toward compromise.

Here was the fundamental difference between the two. Castle, because of his past autonomy had adapted his material to meet whatever compromises were presented, mainly financial. But because of being his own boss, for the most part, the compromises were generally of his own choosing. Castle's background was 'B'

movies, a treadmill of feckless scripts, production line moralising and low, low budgets where one was endlessly told that every cent counts.

After so many years of having to justify every expense—every prop, sound tape and bathing cap used by would-be bald Indian extras (*Conquest of Cochise*), cost effectiveness becomes, like anything grasped at an early age, inherent. The story, and such aesthetic qualities as might be thrown in, were strictly dominated by budget considerations.

Polanski's grounding was equally strict, but a grounding geared more towards aesthetics than finances. When *Cul De Sac* and *Repulsion* were made he was detached to a healthy degree from the pros and cons of the budgets by producer Michael Klinger—in short he had an overseer.

Aware of what Union film crews cost, actors overtime payments and the numerous other items necessary for a day's filming can add up to, Castle's goal was to get his films in the can, on time, on or under budget.

Polanski's way of working seemed to be the exact opposite. The budget would fit in around the story.

The above isn't to deride any party, and it should be understood that whereas Polanski was specifically a writer/director, Castle's projects were conceived through the mind of a producer and that the ultimate sales potential of the finished film was the overall priority. On Castle's own admission, what Polanski was talking literally days to shoot, he would have shot in a matter of hours.

In many ways *Rosemary's Baby* set new standards in the horror field. The story was constructed around characters—believable

characters who weren't merely being manipulated by constrictive plotting into dumb situations. The film was made for an intelligent audience, unlike most exploitive horror fair which required an audience to pay, accept and blindly forget. *Rosemary's Baby* didn't tease or patronise its audience in the way that Castle's previous films often had, but then Castle was quenching a public thirst for such movies, a thirst which he created in the first place.

Castle was more a duplicate showman than a maker of exploitation. There was always a feeling of sincerity and naive belief in most of what he was doing. It is ironic that a film which he produced should have been the one that, effectively, caused his career to take a dive. That is, to take a dive in relation to past achievements.

The unanimous critical and public acclaim for *Rosemary's Baby* caused Castle to retreat, and after a slight illness his sense of direction seemed to falter. The market for this type of horror film, with *fun* being the main ingredient, was no longer there, being replaced instead by vicious and repugnant violence, euphemised for advertising purposes as "tough action". Inevitably the purveyors of exploitation brought its public more of what they wanted to see—basically *offa!*—but minus the all-important context.

Night of the Living Dead gave to America the joys of salacious cannibalism, with lubricated entrails masticated in close up.

Rosemary's Baby gave the genre a bit of class and respect.

As a producer/director Castle was somewhere in the middle, but the audiences wanted either one or the other ●



SWAMP THING



Though it is not on the U.I.P. release schedules for this year yet, we received picture material from our Hollywood correspondent Bill Warren on the Wes Craven directed version of the DC Comics character *Swamp Thing*. The budget for the movie was higher than those which Craven is used to and, despite a couple of below par monster suits, the film looks good. Stars familiar to *Starburst* readers include Adrienne Barbeau, of the Carpenter school of movies (she had appeared in both *The Fog* and *Escape from New York*) and Louis Jourdan, who played Dracula in the BBC Television version of the story a couple of years back. We hope that U.I.P. will decide to release the film before too long.







Mad Max

Review by John Baxter

Don't say you weren't warned. From the middle of 1979, when George Miller's inspired mating of science fiction and road movie, **Mad Max**, started raking up its \$100 million profit, prospects of a sequel were never far away. Now **Mad Max 2** is cleaning up all over, and heading, it's obvious, for fame, not only as the most expensive film ever made in Australia, but the most profitable as well—a honour until now held by its predecessor.

It deserves to do well. **Mad Max 2** is simply one of the hottest, liveliest, most entertaining of films to come down the freeway in a long time.

And it comes down fast. Beginning with *The End of Civilization As We Know It* in a war that wipes out the world's oil fields and makes gasoline the only medium of exchange, it races through scores of car wrecks and bloody encounters between

outlaws and the vestigial remains of ordered society, to end in a chase where Max pilots a fully-laden gas tanker down the Australian outback highway pursued by homicidal marauders in a variety of hot rods, converted stock cars and super bikes, all of them armed with a grisly array of weapons. If there's a dull moment in **Mad Max 2**, I didn't see it.

Mel Gibson, the young grey-eyed American-born star of **Mad Max** returns as the pursuit cop we saw robbed of wife and child in the first film. He still drives his blatting black-on-black V-8 chase car around the ruler-straight Australian backroads, but not on behalf of a defunct police force. A burnt-out case in black leathers, one leg supported by a metal brace, he lives from fill-up to fill-up, looting gas from wrecks and skirmishing with the local bandits, led by a warlord in a metal mask known only as The Humungus—a sign to anyone who knows stateside slang that the

script of **Mad Max 2** doesn't take itself too seriously.

Swedish body-builder Kjell Nilsson plays Humungus in studded jock strap, metal helmet and a good deal of baby oil. His followers range from red-eyed weirdos in grubby overalls driving souped-up dune buggies, through strung-out Hell's Angels in Mohawk haircuts and black feathers, to the helmeted LAPD heavies familiar from the first film; for convenience, the unit categorised them as Smegma Crazies, Mohawk Bikers and Gay-Boy Berserkers respectively.)

Searching for gas, Max captures a roving pilot of a one-man helicopter (*Bruce Spence*) who, at gunpoint, is persuaded to show him where a group of far-sighted technocrats have set up their own crude oil refinery to manufacture gasoline; with it, they plan a trek to some safe hide-out on the coast. Max throws in with them in return for gas alone,

Max 2





refusing to help them in their escape, but when Wez, leader of the Mohawk Bikers, ambushes him wrecks his car and shoots his dog, the lone driver briefly goes over to their side and drives the loaded oil tanker in the escape bid.

Drifting in and out of the story is probably the film's most engaging character, The Feral Kid, a hairy fur-clad mite whose stainless steel boomerang lops fingers and splits skulls. Eight year old Emil Minty plays him with the gravity of an under-age Clint Eastwood, out-classing the noble goodies; with costumes made up mainly of soft-skin moccasins—Mike Preston, the leader is called "Pappagallo"—and fur-out vests, the crew immediately christened them the Gucci Arabs.

Mad Max 2 moves superbly and looks sublime. Dean Semler's camera exploits the purple half-light of the desert evening and the glaring red earth of the Australian outback. Max Aspin's car crashes and stunts out-do all but the best of American road movie classics, and George Miller again shows himself as the most international of all Australian film directors. Nobody who enjoyed **Mad Max** is likely to be the least bit disappointed by its successor.

Anyone who imagines it's easy to make films in sunny Australia should listen to the recital of misery that commences at any mention of **Mad Max**. Made for \$400,000, mostly in a suburban Melbourne house, and put together by a team whose technical competence was, to put it kindly, variable, it left first-time feature director George Miller depressed. "It was such a tough film to shoot, such a bitter experience, that there was no way in the world I ever thought I'd do another one." Mel Gibson called it, diplomatically, "commercially great but artistically

unsuccessful." The American distributor demanded that the sound track be re-mixed—not merely to add US accents, but because the poor sound engineering made much of it incomprehensible. Nor did they like the title—market research showed, they said, that "Max" was an "effeminate" name. Their suggestion?—**Heavy Metal**.

Mad Max's international success surprised everyone. Miller and his partner, Byron Kennedy, wasted no time in cashing in on it, going to Hollywood to prepare a horror film called **Roxanne**, from a screenplay by Miller which pays homage to his favourite shocker, DePalma's **Carrie**. But the high cost of money held up production, and the pair returned to Australia late in 1980 with an outline of **Mad Max 2**. Miller showed the 25-page outline to documentary director and film buff Brian Hannant for his suggestions. Hannant eventually shared script credit with Miller and Terry Hayes, and handled the film's second unit as well.

Hannant recalls, "They knew I had a strong background in fantasy and comic book heroes and that sort of fiction. I knew the genre better than both of them, in terms of the movies I'd seen. I knew what would work and what wouldn't."



THE REAL MAD MAX

Feature by Tony Crawley

I couldn't believe it," says **Mad Max 2** stunt chief, Max Aspin. "Ten weeks shooting and nobody has a scratch. Then, wham! Five people injured in a couple of days."

The victims included **Mad Max** Aspin himself, his stunt-wife, Dale, who also tended Dog, and in fact, now owns Max's fearless pooch.

Well, it's hardly surprising given the Bond-comic **Raiders** bunch of precision stunts. A new record in actual numbers for an Australian film. And no doubt for the number of stunt folk required—nine in all.

Under **Mad Aspin's** careful eyes they pitch a bulky fuel tanker on its side, rolling over and breaking its back... fire a motor-cyclist 65ft through the air after smashing into a stationary vehicle... and drive a sedan between that tanker's massive set of 24 wheels.

"Up until this movie," says Max, "the longest chase sequence I'd worked on came to eight minutes of screen time. Our tanker chase in **Max** last about thirteen minutes! On top of that, we've got a variety of small chases and stunt sequences which are just incredible."

And dangerous.

First casualty on the movie was Guy Norris, 21, just back in harness for the first time since busting a leg the year before in a movie high-fall. Perhaps he should have waited...

Guy, it was, riding that motorsickle slap-bang into the stationary dune buggy for Mel Gibson. It's what's known as a cannonball gag. On impact, Guy would throw himself forward, appearing to be fired into the air by the crash... and then land, all being well, on a special pad.

Fine. But for two things. The swirling dust around the buggy (detonated by a small explosive charge) obscured the man's vision—and upon

impact, not only Guy went up, so did the buggy. It met him in mid-air and mid-thigh. Fortunately, he managed to land on his safety-pad. Not that this helped the lastly-mended leg. The steel pin in it was bent 20 degrees. Back to surgery for Guy...

Next day, Max Aspin perfectly delivered a stunning 50mph crashing through a stacked wall of already wrecked cars, nosediving into a ditch, tumbling end over end... and walking away. He'd done it some weeks before and everyone loved it. He wasn't satisfied and persuaded director George Miller to let him do it again. Only better.

Everything went right except for the walking away. Max had crushed a vertebra in his spine as the car rolled. He also broke a heel. He found himself in the next bed to Guy in hospital.

His wife followed him with the same vertebra injury... Dale Aspin is one of Australia's women stunt persons.

She's so much in demand, she was let go from the Broken Hill locations for 24 hours to stunt another project. She fell from a wire suspended between two buildings.

Four days after his spill, Max was back on the set—and still driving. He used the toe of his crutches to work the clutch.

Another mishap befell one of the film's 100 extras—in dock for observation after running his marauder's buggy into another car. Almost a standard traffic accident.

Not so the embarrassing affair of Kim Noyce. Bored at home on his day off, he decided to motorbike it to the **Max** location to see what was going on.

"Out in the bush," laughs Max Aspin, "about twenty miles out of Broken Hill, he passed a camel train... He pulled up to say hello to the camel driver and forgot the camels might not like the high-revving, noisy motorbike engine. One of them kicked out with both legs and knocked Kim ten feet through the air, breaking one of his ankles.

"In all my years in the business, it was the most unusual injury to a stuntman that I've ever encountered."

Byron Kennedy insisted on a release in Christmas 1981 for **Max 2**, which meant shooting in the Australian winter. Broken Hill, 800 miles west of Sydney, was the eventual location; the town was accustomed to film companies, the roads nearby had no distracting telephone poles or cables to mar the bleak emptiness of the plain and its single strip of two-lane black top. Also, the locals guaranteed warm weather right through May and June.

Hannant looks grim as he recalls this promise. "It was probably the worst single physical experience of my life. We had maybe six or eight clear warm days. It rained; the wind was abysmal. The costumes were all designed for warm weather; just G-strings, some of them. I never saw so many blue bums in my life. Genuinely blue. The local Army Disposal shop didn't have a great coat left. All you'd see on the set were these rows of great-coats. The orders would be "Coats off. Camera. Action. Coats on."

A lot of care has gone into the hardware of **Mad Max 2**. In a post-gunpowder society, Max has to hustle for shells for his sawn-off shotgun, and the marauders fall back on tiny one-hand cross-bows and a range of dart-shooting catapults. The vehicles are stock models, modified by years of adaptation; Hannant says, "We wanted them to look like the ordinary cars that these guys had taken out into the desert years before, and welded together every time they started to fall apart."

The lovingly-detailed destruction of these vehicles at the hands of Max in the finale is one of the great sequences of the film. For that alone, it's worth seeing—if you add the laconic dialogue, the great photography and the **The Feral Kid**, you'll undoubtedly decide you had more than your money's worth from **Mad Max 2**. Thank god he was out there!

Mad Max 2 (1981)

Mel Gibson (as Max), Bruce Spence (Gyro Captain), Vernon Wells (Wez), Emil Minty (Feral Kid), Mike Preston (Pappagallo), Kjell Nilsson (Humungus), Virginia Hey (Warrior Woman), Syd Heylen (Curmudgeon), Moira Claux (Big Rebecca), David Slingsby (Feral Man), Arkie Whiteley (Lusty Girl), Steve J. Spears (Mechanic), Max Phipps (Toadie), William Zappa (Farmer), Jimmy Brown (Golden Youth), David Downer (Wounded Man), Tyler Coppin (Defiant Victim), Max Fairchild (Broken Victim), Kristoffer Greaves (Mechanic's assistant), Guy Norris (Bearclaw biker), Tony Deary (Mohawk biker), Anne Jones, James McCordell (Tent Lovers), Kathleen McKay (Young Woman).

Directed by George Miller. Script by Terry Hayes, George Miller, with Brian Hannant. Photographed by Dean Semler. Second Unit direction by Brian Hannant; cameraman, Geoff Simpson. Music by Brian May. Special Effects by Jeffrey Clifford, with Monte Fieguth, David Hardy, Steve Curd. Stunts by Max Aspin with Guy Norris, Gerry Gauslaa, Kim Noyce, Glen Boswell, Bob Hicks, Bradley Patterson, Dale Aspin and Dennis Williams (in truck). Edited by David Stiven, Tim Wellburn, Michael Chirgwin, Max Aspin by Lesley Vandenwardt, with Kara O'Keefe, Special Effects make-up by Bob McCarron, Sound by Lloyd Carrick, Costumes by Norma Morcasau, Art director Graham Walker, Production supervisor Patrick Clancy, Production co-ordinator Rosanna Andrews-Baxter, Produced by Byron Kennedy. Stills by Carolyn Jones.

A Kennedy-Miller film for UK release by Columbia-EMI Warner Distributors. Time: 94 mins.

STARBURST FANTASY CLASSICS

THE CREATURE MOVIES

We take a retrospective look at the three Creature movies, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Revenge of the Creature* and *The Creature Walks Among us*.

A Triple Bill by Phil Edwards

Universal Pictures had made themselves famous for the gallery of classic movie monsters they created in the 30s. *Dracula*, *Frankenstein's Monster*, *The Wolfman*, *The Mummy* and all their various sons and daughters provided the studio with a rich reserve to draw from and kept the company in profits well into the late 40s.

With the great 50s boom in sf films and particularly the related *Sl*/horror genre it was only natural that Universal would seek to create a character monster which would serve as a 50s equivalent to the fiends of yore. Where *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *Co* had had their origins in Victorian literature and assorted folk tales, Universal's new monster was the creation of producer William Alland. Alland had had a great success with *It Came from Outer Space*, directed by Jack Arnold in the 3D process, and with the boffo box office of other company's stereoscopic features like *House of Wax*, *The Maze*, *Phantom of the Rue Morgue*, Universal were keen to find another horror subject which could be shot in the process.

The Creature from the Black Lagoon was the brainchild of Alland, who according to publicity at the time (and therefore probably nothing more than publicity) said that he took the idea from an obscure South American legend about a missing link humanoid/fish creature. In all likelihood it was the title of the film that came first, in much the same way that Val Lewton was given a title to develop into a script during his tenure at RKO.

The physical look of *The Creature* came from the combined talents of director Jack Arnold and resident Universal make-up artist supremo Bud Westmore and his team. In an interview in 1975 Arnold recalled, "I remember one day I was looking at the certificate I received when I was nominated for an Academy Award. There was a picture of the Oscar statuette on it. I said, 'If we put a grilled head on it, plus scales and fins, that would look pretty much like the kind of

creature we're trying to get.'"

Arnold's rough design was handed over to Westmore and he and his team of Jack Kevan, Chris Mueller and Bob Hickman went to work. Mueller sculpted the creature's head over an old bust of Ann Sheridan. Mueller is one of the great unsung masters of plaster work, most notably he was responsible for the interior of the *Nautilus* in Disney's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Westmore added the

effect of a noseless monster feeling such a design added to the horror value. It was also decided that *The Creature* be equipped with giant crab claws and a slashing tail. But as the suit was being designed it was discovered that the claws would be unworkable and the tail would severely restrict the wearer of the suit in the extensive underwater sequences written into the script by Harry Essex and Arthur Ross.





Top left: *The Creature* scrambles aboard the scientists' boat in *Creature From the Black Lagoon* (1954). Above: Bernie Gazer tries to protect Julie Adams from the monster in *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Below left: *The monster carries off a hysterical Julie Adams in the first film of the series.* Below: *Revenge of the Creature* saw the Gill Man chained up as an exhibit as at the Florida Seaquarium. Right: *The Gill Man, a survivor of another Geological era, as he appeared in Creature from the Black Lagoon.*



Originally Glenn Strange was considered for the role of the Creature. Strange had made a minor name for himself as Frankenstein's Monster in such latter rally features as *House of Frankenstein* and *House of Dracula*. In an interview with Don Glut in 1965 he recalled, "I just swim. I was supposed to play *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* too, but that was another underwater hazard. They told me how much the water there was, and I said, 'No, I don't want it.' It turned out they used a swimming double after all, Ricou Browning from Hawaii."

Browning had been discovered by Arnold while the director was scouting locations in Florida. Browning's ability to hold his breath underwater for up to five minutes meant that the Creature could be featured in extended underwater scenes and give an air of believability to the role. However, Browning was relatively small in stature, something that didn't really matter in the underwater scenes but would be unsuitable for the land-based sequences. To fill out the form-fitting suit constructed by Westmore's team an ex-marine named Ben Chapman was chosen. Browning's suit was considerably lighter in colour to Chapman's to allow it to show up against the darker underwater backgrounds, shot in Silver Springs, Florida (where most of the MGM Tarzan films had been lensed).

The Creature from the Black Lagoon is a superbly structured film which while obeying all the rules of the monster movie genre manages to create an air of quiet poetry, particularly in the orchestration and direction of the extensive underwater sequences.



These scenes are even more effective when seen in the 3D process. Jack Arnold proved with this film and its sequel that he was a master of stereoscopes. Never simply using the system to provide startling effects, Arnold's control over the cameras enhance the visuals in a truly striking fashion. In particular two major underwater sequences show Arnold's ability to use the process to heighten the dramatic effect. The first is the justly famous "underwater ballet" performed by Julie Adams. At first the Creature simply watches her, fascinated by this beautiful intruder of his watery domain. Then, as he realises that she poses no threat, he swims towards her (and the audience) and mimics her movements. To see such a beautifully primal and grotesque creation moving with such grace laces the scene with a sub-textual eroticism quite uncommon in cinema. The 3D lends the scene a further air of dreamy sexuality. When the Creature finally moves close enough to touch Ms Adams' ankle it's almost like receiving an electric shock.

Another scene, equally potent in its imagery—though this time of an horrific nature—is the sequence in which the Lagoon's intruders throw a powdered drug into the water in an effort to stun the seemingly all-powerful and intelligent monster. As the drug disperses and there is no sign of the Creature, Richard Carlson and Richard Denning don scuba gear and descend into the black depths. Suddenly, the

Creature is upon them and an all-out battle ensues. Frightening in its ferocity and enhanced by Arnold's rapid and dramatic editing, the sequence has a nightmarish quality, which lends credence to a theory, held by myself and several other followers of Arnold's work, that the director deliberately uses Earth as an alien landscape. (Further reference to this can be found in my study of Arnold's work in *Starburst 25*.) The scene ends with a vicious attack on Denning by the Creature which leaves the scientist dead. The final shot of his body, floating to the surface as the torn air line pumps oxygen uselessly into the water, remains one of the most potent images in all fantasy cinema.

The *Creature from the Black Lagoon* is so flawlessly constructed that from the time the scientist arrives in the lagoon the film races along at breakneck speed and almost every appearance of the Creature is a set piece of superior atmosphere and action.

Completed on a budget of \$250,000, the film was released and immediately proved a



huge success, grossing \$3 million in its first run. Universal had what they wanted, and rapidly the Creature became as much a fantasy film icon to the studio as Dracula and friends.

With such success it was inevitable that Universal should demand a sequel. One year after the release of the first film they prepared the follow-up, *Revenge of the Creature*. Scripted by Martin Berkley and once again directed by Jack Arnold in 3D, the story begins with another expedition to the Black Lagoon. This time it is led by John Agar (probably the most expressionless actor of all time) and John Bromfield. At first it appears that the film is going to be little more than a re-run of the first film, but Arnold realised that he had exploited the exotic Black Lagoon to its fullest in the earlier film. For *Revenge*, Arnold quickly dispenses with the setting, the Creature is captured and returned to Florida's Marineland for study.

The scenes in which the Creature, drugged and helpless, is walked like a sleeping shark



around the pool, only to revive suddenly and make a break for freedom set the tone of the film to come. *Revenge of the Creature*, by relocating the monster into an urban environment, and therefore by bringing him into closer contact with people other than scientists hints at the wholesale violence to come. For *Revenge* is by far the most violent of the three Creature features.

The early scenes in Marineland, where the now fully awake monster is chained in a tank and kept under control with electric cattle prods, introduces an atmosphere of sadism missing from the original, and interestingly it is the humans who instigate the cruelty. The sexual element in *Revenge* is also stronger, though unfortunately it lacks the poetic visual nuances of the first film. Replacing Julia Adams is busty Universal starlet Lori Nelson. As with her predecessor the Creature takes an instant shine to her and in an extraordinary scene breaks into a restaurant where Nelson and Agar are having dinner and carries her off.



Opposite page: Scenes from *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Ricou Browning plays the Gill Man. The scientists around the fossilised hand are Richard Carlson, Julia Adams, Richard Denning and Whit Bissell. This page; above: A rare still of Ricou Browning unmasked. Far right: The Gill Man amuses the crowds with a silly walk in *Revenge of the Creature* (1955).

When she is found some time later her state of dishevelment seems to indicate that she has been violated by the Creature, and it is the visual implication which further adds to the sense of greater physical violence.

For this feature Ricou Browning took over the role totally and subtle changes were made to the costume. The eyes now bulged more and the lips were made fuller and more fish like. Though the film was shot in 3D it received only a limited release in this format. The year was 1955 and the public were tiring of the craze. It was only two years ago that 3D prints were made available again, and then in a sub-standard format which lost much of the clarity and depth of focus so favoured by Arnold.

In many ways *Revenge of the Creature* is the perfect sequel. It captures much of the excitement of the original without being a simple run through. A definite attempt is made to make the Creature more sympathetic and for the most part is successful. The scenes of violence are heightened—in one



outlandish scene the monster picks up a man and literally wraps him around a tree! Equally, scenes showing the Creature overturning cars, crashing into restaurants and being exhibited to a gawping public add to the surrealist imagery and content of the film.

Revenge of the Creature proved almost as successful as the original and Universal, true to tradition, felt that they could eek out one more feature using the monster as star. Once more Jack Arnold was approached to helm the project, but he turned it down feeling, rightfully, that he had extracted as much cinematic mileage as possible from the Gill Man. The job of direction was assigned to John Sherwood who was also responsible for *The Monolith Monsters*, probably the most interesting of all 50s sf thrillers. Sadly, Sherwood was little more than a competent craftsman and *The Creature Walks Among Us* lacks many of the high points of the first two films.

It would be easy to dismiss *Walk Among Us*



as the last gasp of the Creature cycle, and in many respects it is little more than a programmer. However, scripter Arthur Ross realised that to simply pen another Gill Man story would severely strain the imagination (after all the Creature would seem to have been thoroughly killed off in the previous films) and would turn the story into nothing more than a standard monster on the loose opus, something the cinemas were already full of.

Instead Ross devised a story which would humanise the Creature. The monster is found hiding in the Florida Everglades and while a capture is being attempted he is severely burned. Apparently dead, he is taken to a laboratory where it is discovered that he still breathes, and is just unconscious due to shock. An X-ray reveals that the monster is in fact equipped with almost human lungs. A quick snip by scientist Jeff Morrow and the Gill Man is able to breathe and no longer needs the water to sustain his life. But instinct proves stronger than vivisection, and the

Creature spends most of the film's scant 78 minute running-time trying to return to the water.

Unfortunately, like so many 50s low budget sf films, characterisation of the humans in the story is spartan and at best they all seem an unlikeable bunch constantly squabbling among themselves. This also brought the humanity of the captured monster into sharper focus and apart from one or two outbursts he is relatively unimportant. Where in the first two films the monster initiates the action and acts as an agressor/protector (his domain), for *Walks Among Us* she spends much of his time either comatose on an operating table or penned up like an overgrown dog. With his scales burnt off he is dressed in a rough canvas suit, and along with the guttural grunting he emits it is easy to draw a comparison with the *Frankenstein Monster* of old—a victim of science gone wild.

Like previous outings, *Creature Walks Among Us* has a monster with the eye for the leading lady, in this case Leigh Snowden. Oddly though, the sexual aspect is downplayed this time round, however this is more due to director Sherwood's mundane cinema eye than Ross's screenplay.

To some *Creature Walks Among Us* marks a sad end to the series, but in my view the closing shot of the film contains as much beauty as either of the previous movies. Moving inexorably onwards to the cliffs overlooking the ocean, drawn by an instinct he can't understand but can only follow, the Creature plunges to his final resting place to



drown through the lungs created by the scientists. With his gills inoperable due to the fire in the opening scenes, the Creature dies by the very element which originally gave him life way back in the Devonian Age.

The character of the *Creature From the Black Lagoon* indeed gave Universal a new monster for their rogues gallery, and a considerable amount of merchandise has appeared over the years. Comic books, plastic kits, standees and various novelisations have appeared ensuring that the image of the great Gill Man is part of most people's sub-conscious.

In recent years John Landis has announced that he was going to remake Arnold's classic original by combining the stories of *Creature* and *Revenge*. The project has been on/off for two or three years but it would now seem that the film is in active pre-production. Landis will serve as executive producer and as of this writing Jack Arnold is slated as director. Rob Bottin has been mentioned as possible creator of effects and it will be interesting to see if recent developments in special effects technology will be able to add much more to the rubber suit created by Bud Westmore. Whether Arnold will be able to recapture the sheer visual poetry in this remake is open to question.

With Carpenter's remake of *The Thing* about to be unleashed, and with sequels and remakes almost completely filling the "in production" notices regularly dished out by the film companies it looks like Hollywood is undergoing an extreme case of *deja vu* ●



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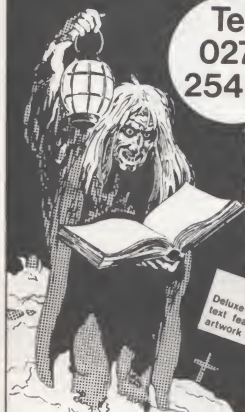
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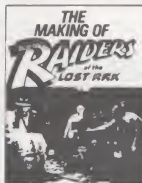
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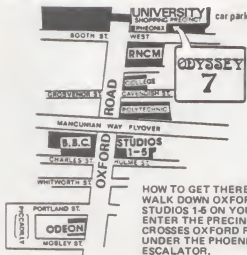
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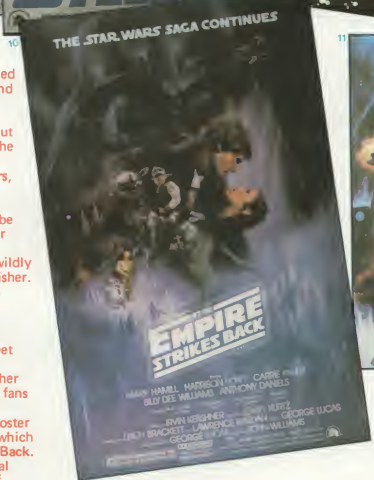
POSTER RESEARCH BY
PHIL EDWARDS



1. **Star Wars.** This is the original American one sheet poster with art by Ton Jung. Though there were earlier advance posters for the film printed on myla, this design is the one with which the film was originally launched in America.
2. **Star Wars.** Famed fantasy illustrators and Hildebrandt Brothers were commissioned to submit a design which was used for an advance poster and later used for one of several merchandising posters. This is the first Star Wars poster to appear in England but was scrapped after a few weeks when it was felt that the poster's imagery didn't fully represent the movie's sense of action and adventure.

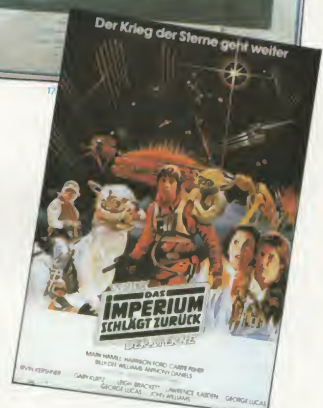


3. British posterist Tom Chantrell was commissioned to design a new poster for the English market and the design proved so popular that it was used in several countries.
4. Australia originally used the Tom Jung design but also picked up on the Chantrell artwork while the film was still in it's first release.
5. Germany also used the Jung design for Star Wars, though the colours were printed in much richer hues.
6. This odd Italian Star Wars poster is unlikely to be from the original release, rather it is from a later reissue. Its crude comic design printed in raw primary colours presents a highly stylised and wildly inaccurate picture of Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher.
7. By comparison with the majority of Polish film posters, this design for Star Wars is relatively subdued. Interesting to note that Alec Guinness becomes Aleo Guinness.
8. The famed Star Wars Style D American one sheet poster was used for the Summer '78 reissue in America. Its "poster on poster" effect was further highlighted outside American movie houses when fans tried to peel it from hoardings.
9. This superbly atmospheric advance one sheet poster from America really indicated the importance which Darth Vader would have in the Empire Strikes Back.
10. This gorgeous American design was the original release poster for Empire. The subtle blend of colours and the prominence of Han and Leia in a classic clench is reminiscent of the poster art for *Gone With the Wind*. The poster also plays down the hardware aspects of the film in favour of the more romantic and darker themes presented in the sequel.
11. Adapted to the British poster, this design was only used in key areas, particularly London and was withdrawn after a short time.



12. A secondary Empire design used in America became the major one used in England. Once again Vader takes prominence and more accent is placed on the action and hardware aspects of the film.
13. As with many Japanese posters the use of air-brushed photomontage highlights this design which features all the major characters with Cloud City and an almost subliminal Vader dominating the design.





14. A second design for Japan is considered by many to be the finest Empire poster of all. The unusual use of green as a dominant colour is unusual when one considers that blue has always been the "colour" of the Star Wars Saga. The design shows the epic scope of the film combining several elements only hinted at in other artwork for the feature. Vader is once more almost used subliminally, though his dominance in the design is still important.
15. Australia used the Japanese design also, however that country's printing logo in silver gives the poster a "class" quite uncommon to Australian movie posters.
16. Italy used the second design for its Empire campaign though simplified some aspects of the design to gain a more ethereal effect.
17. This interesting German design for Empire shows how various designs can be incorporated to make a new design. The background is taken from the Japanese, from the original American poster the image of Luke astride the Taun-Taun. Oddly, this poster is one of the few which actually features Yoda as a key design element. ●

A Starburst interview by John Fleming

DENNIS SPOONER

Dennis Spooner's ITC series, like *Randall & Hopkirk (Deceased)* always sold well in America and other overseas territories and, that, he was criticised.

"During the Sixties," he says, "I was bitterly attacked by somebody who said Look! There's Spooner sitting at Elstree pandering to the Americans! I wrote him a letter saying You're quite wrong. I'm pandering to the Japanese and the Germans and everybody. ITC was basically an exporting company. We were earning foreign currency. We got the Queen's Award to Industry. It's no good trying to sell a locomotive in America if you insist on building it for the gauge of track that's relevant in Britain. I don't see why people get upset when you do the same thing in television. The alternative was not that we would make a tv series without pandering. The alternatives we had were either to make it and sell it abroad or not make it at all. Nowadays, the situation's even worse. They made last series of *The Professionals* for something like £160,000 an episode. If it just gets shown twice in Britain, it recoups nothing like £160,000. You have to sell an expensive show abroad."

The ITC adventure series of the 1960s were undoubtedly expensive and certainly successful abroad, but Spooner's favourite series is surprising: "I very much liked *Jason King*," he says, "because I think it's a helluva lot better than it was thought at the time."

Jason King was a spin-off from the previous ITC series *Department S*, which the company saw as following the successful trend of *Fraud Squad*, *Ghost Squad* and *Interpol*. When Dennis Spooner was first approached to write a new series, he thought God! What department hasn't been done yet? It seemed everything had been done, so he thought up a new department: "I thought what we've got to do is bring up-to-date the *Marie Celeste*. If the *Marie Celeste* were to happen tomorrow, who would investigate it? So the gimmick of *Department S* was that every "hook" was a *Marie Celeste*. There was an absolutely inexplicable beginning, which we then spent 50 minutes explaining."

The three central characters in the series were a straightforward investigator (Joel Fabiani), a computer genius who worked on facts and probabilities (Rosemary Nichols) and Jason King (Peter Wyngarde) an imaginative writer.

"I knew," says Spooner, "that during the War, Winston Churchill had got hold of Dennis Wheatley and said OK. You're clever. Get me six thriller writers and tell me how to win the War. If they ever did develop a department to investigate *Marie Celestes*, they would get an Ian Fleming or a Dennis Wheatley. With the three heroes in *Department S*, you got the normal approach and the analytical approach and a hair-brained approach from someone who gave ridiculous explanations which—every now and then—were right. Jason King tended to turn up for ten minutes in *Department S*, behave like a combination of Ian Fleming and Noel Coward, obviously thought he was God and made a lot of money. He worked very well because you saw him in small doses and he never dominated the show."

The outcome of these relatively short appearances, though, was astonishing. Peter Wyngarde became a television star in Britain and a megastar in West Germany. "He was enormous in Germany," says Spooner. "He got voted Man of The



Top: From the *Jason King* episode *The Company I Keep*, Jason King (Peter Wyngarde) and Contessa Di Maggiore (Toby Robbins) listen to a tape in King's flat. Right: Patrick Macnee as Steed and Diana Rigg as Mrs Peel starred in the most popular series of The Avengers.

Year with Willy Brandt second. We paid Peter so many pounds in salary, but he made sort of a million quid a year going over to Germany every Sunday opening supermarkets."

Wynyard was such an international success that, when *Department S* ended, ITC got worldwide bookings for a *Jason King* series before they had even thought of making any such show. Because the buyers clearly existed, ITC felt commercially obliged to make the series and asked Dennis Spooner to create it.

"I'm not saying I didn't want to do the *Jason King* series," says Spooner, "but I thought the failing of *Jason King* would be just what it turned out to be—that, in big doses, he would be too flamboyant." On the other hand, there were immense possibilities for humour which appealed to Spooner:

"What other series could you have with a hero who hardly ever won a fight?" he asks. "In one episode, he knew the crooks were going to meet in a warehouse. So he had himself delivered to the warehouse in a packing case with champagne and everything. It goes into the warehouse. But what happens is they put the case down and then put about 30 other cases on top of it and he never got out till the end of the episode! What other show can you do that on with your leading man?"

Spooner's next series was *Randall & Hopkirk (Deceased)*, known in the US as *My Partner the Ghost* and covered by Tise Vehimagi in *Starburst* 40.

Then, almost as suddenly as they had started, the great ITC adventure series of the 1960s ended.

"I suppose ITC stopped making those type of adventure series after *The Protectors* because, I think, inflation had caught up with the cost of production and the revenue that comes back from television is limited. The return from a television show is governed by what the various countries are prepared to pay. You can say you'll get back £6 million from a television series and that's fine if it cost you £3 million. But, if it costs you £4 million and then £5 million and you're still only getting £6 million back, then you start dropping shows and suddenly you're investing but you haven't got the bonanza.

"It's different in feature films, you see, because there is the chance of making £175 million if you make *Star Wars*. That doesn't happen very often, but it doesn't have to happen very often. In other words, in another medium there is at least the chance of a bonanza, but in television it becomes very much a

calculated profit.

"At that time, the BBC weren't allowed by their Charter to get into this television film area and it was too late for the other ITV companies ever to catch up with ATV (who owned ITC) and build up the distribution that ATV had. So ATV said—or Lew Grade said, because that's what ATV and ITC was—My God, we're sweating blood and the profit margin is dropping and it's going to reach a point where we're not going to clear cost. I don't know any of this, because I wasn't in the meetings, but it has filtered back to me over the years. ATV and ITC just said Well, we've got a film distribution thing and we've got the film expertise, so why the hell are we making it for television? So ITC went into cinema films and on some of their films (like *The Muppet Movie*) they did hit the jackpot. So I think that's why the television adventure series stopped. They went because of the system, rather than anything else."

This meant, of course, that Spooner found himself out of a job. "After *The Adventurer*," he says, "I sort of wandered around. I went back to Gerry Anderson for a while—I did some of *The Protectors* and *U.F.O.* I never did *Space: 1999* because that was at the same time I was doing things for *The New Avengers*. I





Top row, left to right: Jason King (Peter Wyngarde) and Cora Simpson (Stephanie Beacham) in the Jason King episode *The Company*. I keep Jason King handcuffed by Pelli (Hugh Dermott) in the Jason King episode *Flamingos Only Fly on Tuesdays*. Robert Powell guest starred in the *Doomwatch* episode *Survival Code*. Centre row, left to right: Peter Wyngarde with Francisca Tu in the Jason King episode *A Band of Thin Air*. Jason King quizzes Paolo Coroli (Bill Nagy) and his girlfriend (Minika Dietrich) in *The Trojan Tanker*, *Department S*. A portrait of Jean Hopkirk (Annette Andrieu) from the series *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*. Bottom row, left to right: Mike Pratt as Jeff Randall and Kenneth Cope as Marty Hopkirk in *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*. Marty tries to make contact with his wife Jean at a seance, in the episode *Who Killed Cock Robin?*



dunno, I suppose I just became a totally freelance writer. I wrote, I think, three episodes of *Doomwatch* for the BBC, where I worked with Kit Pedlar, whom I knew from my time at *Doctor Who*.

"I found *Doomwatch* very horrifying because Kit Pedlar, who worked for the government, kept wandering into scientific establishments and coming out with amfuls of files marked Top Secret. He came out with all these highly secret documents of ministers and Prime Ministers and the Atomic Energy Authority. It scared me to death, because the episodes were all based on truth. I wrote one about some nerve gas leakage from the English Channel. It seems that 20 years ago, [the chemical warfare scientists at] Porton Down or somewhere made a nerve gas and couldn't destroy it. If they'd broken a phial, life on Earth would have ceased. So they said My God! What do we do with it! So they buried it in concrete and put it in steel containers and dropped it in the Plymouth Trench [in the sea-bed]. Then, after they'd dropped it down, they found out that the Plymouth Trench is slowly closing an inch a year or something. It will close completely in a certain number of years and this gas will become harmless in a certain number of years and it's so close it's... I

mean, we're not going to be around—it's thousands of years time—but the fact that these things go on I found very... intriguing."

Doomwatch was a surprising series for Spooner to work on because he prefers light-hearted programmes in the Jason King vein. That is a type of show which is in short supply nowadays: "You get a pendulum effect," says Spooner. "At the time of Jason King and the first *Avengers*, there was *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* and lots of others which were all in that sort of idiom. Then you go through a very serious *Kojak-Sweeney-Professionals* period. I story-edited the first series of *The Professionals* and that was an unhappy experience insofar as they're all serious and straight stories. I mean, I do tend to write on a fantasy, send-up level and I find I can't write *The Professionals* without trying to have somebody send it up or having them meet people they don't want to meet. I'd find a hijacker who wouldn't know where he wanted to go and they'd be worrying about bringing the plane down because he'd keep changing his mind. I wouldn't take it seriously. Maybe it's my view of the world that a lot of these things shouldn't be taken seriously.

"But, anyway, eventually the serious period will end and someone will say Let's do a light show. They've made several attempts to do a light show in America, but they just haven't caught on. I worked on *Salvage and Hart to Hart* and *A Man Called Sloane*. *Hart to Hart* is... I think Robert Wagner's terrific, but it's back to the *Thin Man* films, really. When I was over in America, I wrote two stories for *A Man Called Sloane* and I read the other scripts and thought they were magnificent. But Robert Conrad! It was the casting killed that show. The scripts were excellent. I read them and they were as good as any scripts I'd ever seen."

The origin of *A Man Called Sloane* is, to say the least, complicated. Dennis Spooner and Brian Clemens went to the US to do some work: "We wrote a series for Quinn Martin," says Spooner. "They eventually called it *Escapade*. It was one of those things where they made a tv Movie of the Week which showed here and it was going to be an American version of *The Avengers*. The format was very much like *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* There was a man and a girl who went through a toyshop to where there was a Bond-like thing. Really, they were Steed and Diane Rigg in American terms, set in San Francisco. But it didn't really work.



"A Man Called Sioane virtually came out of it. Quinn Martin couldn't get an American *Avengers* away, so *A Man Called Sioane* was a step back nearer to reality. But it was in that No-Man's land. If you went to make that sort of show, you've got to be James Bond or *The Avengers*. Once you start to give it an edge of reality, it becomes silly. Brian (Clemens) once said to me that *The Avengers* was full of extraordinary characters because Steed was the hero. If Steed walked through a packed London Airport filled with real people he would look a fool. He'd look a twit because who behaves like Steed? So you have to make everyone around him extraordinary and then you accept Steed as normal."

Spooner and Clemens were also involved in a project to bring back the British *Avengers* as an (American) ABC-TV Movie of the Week. "At the moment," says Spooner, "we've done the script and been paid, but it's fallen through. I would have thought *The Avengers: The Movie* would have got its production costs back in Britain alone on theatrical release. If *Murphy on the Buses* and the *Sweeney* films did well... I mean, *The Avengers* has got a much more international appeal than *The Sweeney*. Maybe the *Avengers* movie will still be made, but our original financiers have gone after putting in quite a lot of development money. It seems incredible that they've backed out and I don't understand why."

One thing that seems equally odd is why Dennis Spooner, a writer with a proven track record in adventure films, has never moved over to big-screen movies. "Basically, I didn't have the choice," he says. "You've got to be asked to write a feature film and it's one helluva lot of money to produce and the background I have on my television shows qualifies me technically, but it doesn't qualify me in the eyes of the producers who sit with their big cigars and say Who wrote *Sluth*? Go get Anthony Shaffer to write *Murder on the Nile*. In fact, I have worked on a lot of films with no credit—purely doing cutting jobs and re-writes. I mean, I just finished one last Friday. I dunno what the title is and it's not for publication in *Starburst* anyway because, contractually, I doubt if I'll get a credit."

Spooner is a busy man. He and Brian Clemens have co-written three stage plays in the last two years: "We decided we were going to write a thriller," he explains. "But when Brian and I get together we make each other laugh so much that, by the time we'd finished the thriller, it was a comedy-farce with everyone hiding the body. We tried it out in English at a theatre in Germany and it worked. It was called *Murder-Go-Round* but had the title changed to *Drop Dead, Darling*, and, after its tour of Britain, it'll hopefully come into the West End. It's full of twists. When Brian and I read it now, not only do we not know how we managed to think of it, but we have to work quite hard to understand it. We decided this was silly—trying to write a thriller and ending up with a comedy—so we then decided to write a comedy and that's called *Will You Still Love Me in the Morning*? The third play is a thriller called *All About Murder*."

"Maybe we wrote them because we both saw our 50th birthday approaching and television is a living, but not the sort of living you get from writing *Dial M for Murder*. If it works, we're not really writing stage plays, we're writing our pension. No, not really. But it seems silly to have done all this writing and not tried a stage play. They're more lasting and rewarding than television and, if they're done around the world, they're more financially rewarding end you can go and see them and... I dunno, we just did write them. We were only going to write one, but we enjoyed it so we ended up writing three. If you enjoy writing something, then that's a bonus—that's great."



Top: Peter Wyngarde as Jason King in *Department S*. The character was so popular that he earned his own solo series, titled (strangely enough!) *Jason King*. Dennis Spooner worked as script editor on the first series of *The Professionals*. Lewis Collins (as Bodie), Gordon Jackson (Cowley) and Martin Shaw (Doyle) starred.

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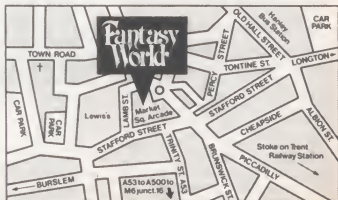
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it's only a movie

Everytime I see Christopher Reeve's name I feel embarrassed. It's all because of something that happened a few years ago now, and it wasn't entirely my fault, but the sense of embarrassment remains.

The occasion was the World Science Fiction Convention held in Brighton in 1979. I wasn't officially one of the organisers but I did help out a lot and among my duties was the task of looking after some of the guests, like Nigel Kneale, Val Guest, Derek Meddings... and Christopher Reeve. Now as a PR person I'm not exactly hot stuff but things didn't go too badly until it was Mr Reeve's turn to receive the treatment...

He had just returned to start work on *Superman 2* and had come to the convention almost straight from the airport. From the moment he arrived things started to go wrong. By coincidence two

climax of *The Day of the Locust* where the crazed mob go berserk and start ripping people rim from rim. As I stared helplessly at the blank doors of the lift I quipped, "This is a job for Superman."

This was the first of my little jokes that didn't go down well with Mr Reeve.

Then someone had the bright idea of using the fire escape at the rear so off we rushed, pursued by fans waving pens. We were also pursued by a hotel employee yelling that we couldn't use the fire escape...

Mr Reeve was looking a bit agitated by the time we got him set up at the signing desk. By then he was no doubt wondering if he was going to get out of the convention alive. I guess I should have reassured him that sf fans, despite their appearance, are a pretty harmless bunch and are not to be confused with *Star Trek* fans who are capable of horrendous acts *en masse*...



characters dressed as *Star Wars* stormtroopers had gone out into the street in front of the hotel to be photographed with the manager. For a joke (ha) they decided to hold up the traffic and, of course, the first car they stopped was Reeve's. This meant he had to get out in the middle of the road, surrounded by an instant traffic jam. He thought we'd done it to him deliberately...

A desk had been set up in the lobby on the first floor in order for him to carry out the first of two signing sessions so we immediately put him into a lift and took him up there. We emerged to find a huge throng of waiting fans but no desk. Then one of the organisers appeared, none other than our ex-book reviewer John Bowles, to blithely announce that as the queue of waiting fans had grown so long he'd decided to move the desk up a floor. Unfortunately, he'd neglected to pass on this interesting bit of information...

As one we turned back to the lift but the doors were already shut. The milling fans seemed to be becoming restless and in my fevered imagination I could see the

The first signing session began smoothly but then I noticed that a small American girl had materialised from nowhere, seated herself beside Reeve at the desk and was controlling the flow of fans with a rod of iron, metaphorically speaking. Puzzled, I presumed she was his personal assistant and that he must have been carrying her in one of his pockets.

But, during the first break in the session, he took me to one side and suggested I tell her to get lost because she was being too abrasive with the fans. "But isn't she with you?" I asked. Nope, she wasn't. He thought she was one of us. I still don't know where she came from or who she was. Obviously a fannish gremlin.

By the time of the banquet he'd relaxed somewhat and even managed to eat the food, which is more than I was capable of doing, thus proving he had powers beyond those of mortal men. There was also an interesting collection of people at our table, including Arthur C. Clarke and Derek Meddings (who, of course, was a familiar face to Reeve). But at one point



starring John Brosnan

he did complain to me about his hotel room. "It's right behind the hotel's neon sign. It's going to be impossible to sleep there."

I drunk more wine and stared at the ceiling.

The most embarrassing moment came during the Hugo Awards ceremony (the Hugo is the sf equivalent to the Oscar, and just as meaningless). Superman 1 had won but when the nominations were being read out it was *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* that got the thunderous applause. Reeve, who then had to go up on stage and collect the award, rose to the occasion (natch) by announcing that he thought the whole thing was fixed. I think he was joking...

Afterwards we had planned a small reception for him in the Hospitality Suite. "Don't worry," I assured him, "There won't be many people. Just a few

amateur night," said Warner Brothers.

So there you have it. I have a strong feeling that if I ever fall off a building the guy in the blue suit isn't going to turn up until after I hit the pavement.

While we wait with fingers crossed for John Carpenter's remake of *The Thing*, and hope that it will be better than the remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, I've been thinking about other 1950s science fiction movies I'd like to see remade. One of them is *War of the Worlds*. Now I like Pal's version, wires and all, but wouldn't it be great to see a new version that is set in the period of the novel and utilises all the modern developments in special effects? This occurred to me while watching the 'Imperial Walkers' sequence in *The Empire Strikes Back* — surely, I thought to myself, it would be possible to animate the Martian war machines in the same



of the writers and some of the organisers... Well, it started off small but as time went by the suite began to resemble the ship's cabin in *A Night at the Opera*. By the end of it there seemed to be more people in there than in the rest of the hotel. "Gee, I guess the news leaked," I said after he had signalled his intention to make an early departure.

As I saw him off in his limousine back to his hotel I breathed a sigh of relief. Nothing else can go wrong, I thought. But I was wrong. The following week I checked with the publicity office at Warner Brothers — who had arranged Reeve's visit — and learned, to my horror, that his hotel had insisted he pay his bill before he left the next morning. And this was after we had stressed to the management that he was guest of the convention (I later found out that the same hotel had treated other convention VIP guests in a similar fashion).

"Oh, I am sorry," I muttered, "But otherwise what did he think of the convention?"

"He said it was 'amateur night, real

way. Admittedly the war machines would be harder to animate than the Walkers because they only have three legs and I've never been able to figure out exactly how they moved. Like a one-legged man on crutches, perhaps? No, that would look silly.

It would be a very expensive movie, true, but I'd love to see it.

Another idea I had was a sequel to *Forbidden Planet*. What, I hear you say, how can you have a sequel when the planet of Altair 4 blew up at the end? Easy, you just set the action on another planet that had been colonised by the alien Krell and had underwent the same disaster with their Id machines. It has since been colonised by humans who are unaware of the Krell machinery beneath their feet which is again creating Monsters from the Id. You could have Leslie Nielsen, Anne Francis and Earl Holliman doing cameo roles and even bring back Robbie the Robot. Gosh.

You can have this idea for free, MGM, there's just one catch. You see I have this marvellous script titled *Jawman* and...

VIDEO SCENE

Last time I mentioned that one of the classic sf movies, **The War of the Worlds** was on video and it holds up fairly well, although anything longer than 85 minutes might have shown the cardboard characters up for what they were. (Incidental intelligence; in the very first scene in the movie the heroine emerges from the movie house to see the Martians' ships landing and the movie she's been to see—why none other than **Samson & Delilah**! made some four years earlier for Paramount, the producers of **The War of the Worlds**).

However, let's take a look at some other classics from that period in the early fifties, which was a rich time for the science fiction film. There are probably many readers who might not have had the chance to see the movies in cinemas, with the diminution of revival houses and tv does not tend to go in for sf seasons very much.

The Thing

Also coming to earth but a couple of years earlier (1951) was **The Thing**, running at 86 minutes, a nice tight length and a lesson for the producers of today. This film was based on the novelette "Who Goes There?" by Don A. Stuart and was directed by Christian Nyby. However, there has always been controversy about the part played by the film's producer, none other than the great Howard Hawks himself. Hawks denied that he did have anything to do with directing it and I think that on the whole the film tends to bear it out; but with one interesting exception, which I'll come to in a moment.

For once the location is not the usual small American town, but the Arctic where a strange object has come down into the ice. A team is sent out from the American Air Force base, to contact a party of scientists and jointly visit the scene of whatever has landed. It, of course, turns out to be a flying saucer, and there is a famous and well-judged scene where the party spread out to the perimeters of the object to see how large it is and, accompanied by Dimitri Tiomkin's splendid threatening music, they realise what it is under the ice.

Although they accidentally destroy the ship, they do rescue the apparently dead body of a Martian, a huge being and take it back to base. It's here that the fun begins of course, where our friend (none other than James Arness in his pre-Marshall Dillon days) starts eating up, first the dogs, and then people.

Despite the usual noble efforts of the scientists to communicate with the creature, it is left to the air force to destroy the monster. This is indeed something of a Hawk's touch, the practical men who do something. The other touch does seem to bear much more on Hawks or at the very least script-writer Charles Lederer, who was responsible for one of Hawks' greatest male/female comedies **The Front Page**. The scenes between the Captain of the Air crew and the secretary to the head scientist are pure Hawks; they banter about their budding relationship, started earlier, and she tells him that she drank him under the table; later she ties him up so that she can talk frankly to him. A real man's woman. And it's also the girl who comes up with the solution of how to get rid of **The Thing**, when it's discovered that it's a vegetable (the newspaper man utters the



immortal line—"An intellectual carrot—the mind boggles"). She says when the men are discussing what to do with it, "Cook it".

The newspaper man also has the last word, something that has become a catch phrase, when reporting the events to the rest of the world over the radio, "Keep watching the skies."

It will be interesting to see how the new version of **The Thing** turns out, but this version is a valuable addition to the video library.

The Day The Earth Stood Still

The same year the earth had another visitor from the skies, courtesy of Universal Pictures this time, but a much more friendly one, Michael Rennie was the visitor from outer space in Robert Wise's intelligent movie, **The Day The Earth Stood Still**. Adapted from a magazine story by Harry Bates, **Farewell to the Master**, it is still quite a fascinating film. Rennie who plays Klaatu, has come to Earth to warn everybody that they've all got to pull their socks up and stop all this nonsense with atomic bombs, because if they start anything of that in space then the police force from the other planets, a fearsome race of robots, will

blow them off the face of the Universe. Just to show he means business one of the robots is with him, Gort. Of course the Earth people refuse to believe him, and won't even get together to listen to what he has to say. Luckily there are three people who do take notice, a scientist, played by Sam Jaffe, and a mother and young son (Patricia Neal and Billy Gray). Despite some rather simple special effects, and poor miniatures the film still holds up well.

Gort does have a certain menace to him, and only Patricia Neal's fortitude saves earth from his destruction.

Forbidden Planet

A very different sort of robot turned up some five years later, one that was to be so acclaimed that they created another film especially for him. This time the robot was on a distant planet visited by a space ship, looking for the survivors of an earlier expedition which was thought to have perished. Instead they find an extraordinary city, run by one man, Dr Moribus (Walter Pidgeon) his lovely daughter Altaira (Anne Francis) and Robby the Robot. As is well known now the story of **Forbidden Planet** is



developed along the lines of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Sadly Fred Wilcox's direction seems very unimaginative and the acting leaves something to be desired, except in the case of Pidgeon, who does indeed have a certain fine theatricality about, ideal as it happens for the madman as he turns out to

The electronic tonalities and special effects lose something on the small screen but Robby's charm still comes over well (he was to appear in *The Invisible Boy* in 1956).

Other notes

Sweet Sweet Rachel (Rank Video) is one of the series of ABC-TV movies that they have and takes for its theme extra sensory perception. It stars Stefanie Powers as the frightened heiress, Louise Latham as her cousin who was in love with her husband, Pat Hingle as her uncle who seems to be hiding something and Alex Dreier as Dr Darrow, the man who investigates the mystery of the death of Powers' husband through apparent ESP. The film, direly directed in close-ups and really ugly style by one Sutton Roley, suffers also more than most from the intrusion of the ad 'breaks' every ten minutes into the story line.

Very Close Encounters of the 4th Kind (VPD) just needs a word of warning, it has very little to do with science fiction, being a silly Italian comedy which attempted to cash in on the title. Three students dress up as space men and pretend to explore the local talent, which is an excuse for some sexy sequences in space suits.

One worth looking out for however is **The Tomorrow Man** (VCL Cinema Feature). A winner in the 1980 Canadian tv and Film Awards this is an effective little exercise in Kafka-like terror. Set in Canada some time in the future, a new political party has won the election and has set about rounding up those it thinks are likely to oppose it. Our hero is among them and is incarcerated, along with others in a prison where he is tortured, just in case he does have information that might be useful for the leader of the new party, a Dr Fontaine. The interrogation is carried out at first rather reluctantly, but then it develops into a game between the two men.

Flashbacks to an earlier time show some of the developments that led up to the current state of affairs. Strange robot creatures are used in the prison and soon it becomes a battle between the man and the robots as well.

Although the film does not quite tighten the screws enough, nor provide us with quite enough information as to what really is going on, this is a gripping glimpse into the future and well worth a look if you are into this genre ●

The Tomorrow Man (1980 Canadian) Written and Directed by Tibor Takacs. Written by Stephen Zoller and Peter Chapman based on a story by Zoller. 70 mins. Cast: David Clement, Stan Wilson, Gail Dahms, Michele Chicoine, Don Francks.

The Thing is a double feature release from Kingston Video (sale only)—the other movie being *The Stranger on the Third Floor*.

The Day the Earth Stood Still (directed by Robert Wise) is available again for sale only from Magnetic Video.

Forbidden Planet comes from CBS/MGM Video, sale or rental.

(* Last time in a moment of mental aberration I linked Howard Hawks with *The War of the Worlds*; he had nothing at all to do with that film, it was *The Thing that I had in my mind and which I discuss this time.*)

TV ZONE



A selection of scenes from the Sherlock Holmes movies of the 1940s, which are currently being screened on BBC2, early evening Friday nights. Many feel that Rathbone's was the definitive portrayal. Certainly the series was vastly enjoyable. Bravo, BBC, for airing this series. Now... what do you have planned next?

A curious parallel is currently in effect between cinema and television.

It is not the made-for-tv movies shown theatrically (*Shotgun, Masada*, etc) nor is it the big-screen films being shown via the home screen.

In short, it is Sherlock Holmes.

BBC-tv's current telecast of (presumably all) the Basil Rathbone-Nigel Bruce Sherlock Holmes films draws the parallel between film series and tv series.

During the 1930s and '40s the series film was an integral part of the Hollywood studios production system. To moviegoers of this period these films (albeit programme fillers) were regular events to follow—not unlike tv viewers these days tuning in to regular episodes of *Minder*, *The Rockford Files*, *Hill Street Blues*, etc.

Hart to Hart, for instance, is to today's viewers what MGM's *The Thin Man* series was to movie audiences some forty years ago.

To paraphrase film historian James Robert Parish, "A pure-breed series is built on a basic set of characters, governed by a particular backlog of events, which control, but do not hinder, the future tide of their happenings."

Thus, Jonathan and Jennifer Hart will always be the perfectly matched couple who can't help but stumble upon various crimes and murders, and always blending domestic comedy with fast-paced action. Perfectly in the mould of Nick and Nora Charles in *The Thin Man* series of films made during 1934-1947.

Familiarity is the key, the very basic theme. A recurring set of characters going through well-established routines on a continual basis.

Naturally, quite a lot of the old film series were later adapted for television, producing such tele-series as *Boston Blackie*, *The New Adventures of Charlie Chan*, *Dr Kildare*, *Ellery Queen*, *Mr Ed* (by way of *Francis, The Talking Mule*), *The Saint*, *Tarzan*, etc. There was even a *Thin Man* tv series in the late '50s.

Unlike serials (*Captain America*, *Zorro's Fighting Legion*) the film and tv series offer self-contained stories that conclude with each outing. Another curious cross-over, if you like, is the telecast of such serials—*Undersea Kingdom*, for instance—on each successive evening. Fifteen cliff-hanging chapterplays run nightly, Mondays to Fridays. Instead of "Continued at this theatre next week" we have "Continued on this channel tomorrow night."

Overall, it's an interesting cycle to consider. Imagine if you will, some years hence, all the James Bond films packaged together for television screening—and run every weekday afternoon under the banner of something like "007 Theatre." Indeed, it will arrive.

However, back on the note of Sherlock Holmes. Rathbone and Bruce, possibly the epitome of screen Holmes and Watson, altogether made 14 Sherlock Holmes films. Produced during the period 1939 to 1946, these films can now be 'viewed' as a 40-year-old film/television series.

The first two films, *Hound of the Baskervilles* and *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, were made by 20th Century-Fox in 1939, and were set in the true Victorian

period—complete with hansom cabs and the obligatory fog.

Then Universal acquired the property and, in 1942, released *The Voice of Terror* (based on Conan Doyle's *His Last Bow*). The stories were now updated to the 1940s, and World War Two London. The Professor Moriarty's, to be sure, were still around but the real enemy now was coming with the "cold east wind"—the Nazis.

The Universal films were considerably lower in budget to the Fox features, and in some cases revealed a very limited use of sets: *Terror by Night* is located on board a train speeding from London to Edinburgh, *Pursuit to Algiers* is situated on a transatlantic ocean liner, and *The House of Fear* is mainly set in a crumbling Scottish mansion.

The Secret Weapon is perhaps the most interesting of the Universal Sherlock Holmes pictures (drawing as its story source *The Adventure of the Dancing Men*). The story deals with the invention of a new bombsight, which Holmes is employed to safeguard, and Moriarty's attempts at stealing the plans. There is a superb scene where Moriarty has captured Holmes and sets about killing him—by having Holmes' blood drained from his



body, drop by drop! The film is further aided by some excellent overacting between Rathbone and Lionel Atwill's Moriarty.

The **Spider Woman** is also good, but purely on the strength of Gale Sondergaard as the title character. In fact, in anyone in the Sherlock Holmes series of films has more than matched Rathbone's performance it was Sondergaard, positively the most feline of actresses. The **Scarlet Claw** also has its moments. Set in a permanently fog-enshrouded Canadian village, it features strong elements of **Hound of the Baskervilles** with much creeping about in the dark and a plethora of would-be villains. For the most part the story is absurd, but as a visual piece it is delightful.

Maybe when BBC-TV have exhausted their Sherlock Holmes season they may consider further, similar seasons.

Personally, I'd be delighted to see the **Charlie Chan** film series (especially **Charlie Chan at Treasure Island**), the **Mr Moto** series, and the **Philo Vance** series.

Ah! On that latter note, **The Bishop Murder Case** with Rathbone as Vance, where a homicidal maniac known as The Bishop murders . . . No. I won't dwell on it. ●



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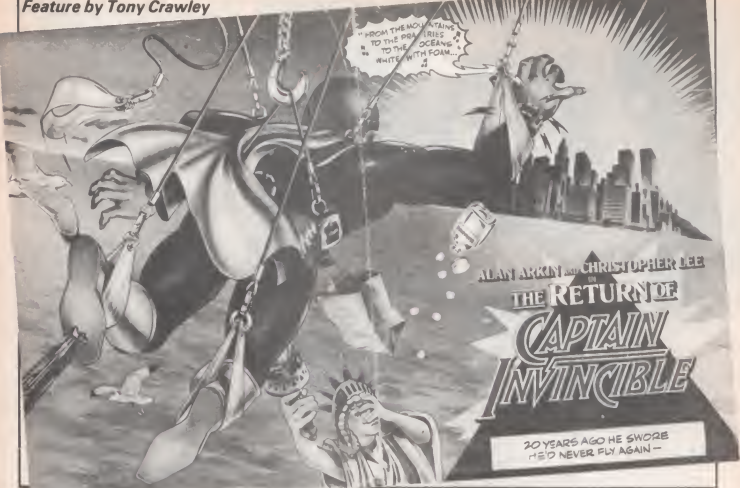
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The publicity artwork for the Australian superhero movie, *The Return of Captain Invincible*. Below: Alan Arkin in the title role of the movie.

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No... it's a rip-off. And a comedy musical one at that. Flushed by their considerable success in the last five years, dominated just now with their global impact of *Gallipoli*, the Aussies have got into the superhero business with the most expensive movie every made in Australia. *The Return of Captain Invincible*.

Oh, he's handsome. He's daring. He flies through the air with the greatest of ease on the side of truth and justice and well, yes, the American way.

Or, rather, he used to... The '50s put paid to old Cap's career. The McCarthy's hearings, would you believe, actually questioned his bravery in smashing shifty-eyed bootleggers, destroying Nazi bombers, supplying food and hope—above all an example—to the poor American youth. The McCarthy witch-hunting even brought his patriotism into doubt.

Invincible was no red—though his cape was. Disillusioned by the enquiries, he dropped, or flew, out. Flew away and hasn't been seen for 30 years.

But now his country needs him. Australia's ultimate weapon—no, not Rolf Harris, but the Hypnoray—has been stolen by a kangaroo with a midgit in its pouch and giggle-gas in his gun.

The Aussie Premier meets with the American President. "What we need now is a hero," states the Prez, clutching a faded photo of his childhood hero, who else but Captain Invincible. Remembering the promise the superhero made to him when he was just a boy scout, the US chief orders his men to search the globe to find Invincible. They're to leave no hero, no grey hair unturned.

Sydney cop Kate Fitzpatrick finds him instantly. This old drunk somehow manages to

save her from a speeding car parked with armed muggers. Later on at the cop shop, she recognises her rescuer from another old photo of Cap. She hunts him down in a flop house. Captain Invincible is a bum. A drunk. "Why did you ever drop out?" asks Kate. "I couldn't tell the good guys from the bad guys anymore," mumbles the slowly sobering Cap.

Air Force One sweeps the American leader into Sydney and he reminds his old hero of his old promise. Can he get back into shape, can he come back and save the world yet again...? Well, of course he can. He'll give it a damn good try, anyway.

Not easy, though. You try flying again when you've had both feet on the ground for 30 years. He's soon green with airsickness as he goes into training in a secret room atop the Sydney Opera House. Kate encourages him by locating much of heroic paraphernalia in local pawn-shops. His 1950s wristwatch-radio, for instance.

The training programme goes well. Except for two things. The flying—no matter how many times he shouts his famous legendary password, "Into the blue", he just can't lift off his undercarriage. Chains and ropes help him into the air, but his flying powers seem extinct. He can't stay up there...

Then, there's his computer brain. After an intensive revision course—a lot has happened in 30 years and he hasn't been keeping up with the news—his brain goes completely haywire. Facts and figures, names and statistics come pouring out of his mouth in a complete and incoherent babble... and smoke issues from his ears!

Warning! If Captain Invincible is back—then so, too, his arch-enemy of 50s. Mr Midnight! He's like a mixture of all Batman's nemeses. He stole the hypnoray, of course—and is using it to dupe American immigrants into buying houses. But he's into all kinds of





Above: The policewoman Patty (Kate Fitzpatrick) who befriends Capt Invincible captures a gang of thugs who mug an aborigine priest and attempt to getaway in a flamethrowing Volkswagen. Below: Patty tries to get the down and out tramp to move on as he is blocking the traffic, little realising that he is, in reality, the mighty Capt Invincible. Opposite above: The Captain and Patty survey the devastation caused by Mr Midnight's men. Opposite below: Alan Arkin as he more normally appears, in a scene from *The In-Laws*.

States. When I met the writer-director of *Simon* two years ago (Marshall Brickman, Woody Allen's old co-writer) I asked him about what is lacking with Arkin on-screen. In the light of *Captain Invincible*, which Arkin says he adores as a "totally unserious film", Brickman's reply makes interesting reading today.

"Alan does not meet you half-way as an actor," said Brickman. "He's a very serious actor. I think he's brilliant. But you're right, there is something about his... he's not interested in winning you over via personality. Either that or it's something even more strange and elusive; the way he photographs has a kind of austerity that's a little hard for an audience to take. You either like Alan or you don't."

"I've had your kind of comment from people, certain critics in America. Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* loved the *Simon* film and had a problem with Alan who, he said, is just not light enough to carry the comedy. It's a matter of taste. I happen to be a big fan of his. He's not ingratiating. He drives a hard bargain. He plays the part exactly as he conceives it from the writing of it. He's not willing to comment on it, to stand aside from the material and to say, 'Well this fella is crazy—but he's like me.' Burt Reynolds does that. Burt Reynolds can always project a quality independent of the character and Burt's films have done a half a billion dollars already, so obviously he's on to something."

Yes, he is. Burt Reynolds is on to the old Hollywood contract-star syndrome—find the niche the public love you best in, and stay there. Alan Arkin, however, and this is one reason I admire him, takes chances. He switches. He used to be known as the American Peter Sellers because of his

villainy from hiring people to clang garbage lids at dawn... and deposit dog dung on the pavements. A right meanie is Mr Midnight...

It's the news that Midnight's back in action, more than anything else, which finally gets old Invincible in the air and flying from Sydney to his old headquarters in the head of the Statue of Liberty. In true Supie fashion, he takes Kate along for the ride.

And it is in New York that the final battle is waged—the middle-aged, past-it Captain Invincible, who just wants one more drink, and Mr Midnight... whose foul plan seems to be succeeding. He's sent all the immigrants out to sea on giant barges, disguised as housing estates, and he's gonna pulverise 'em with torpedoes from his fleet of submarines...

Well, what do you make of all that? It could be fun. That's the plan, and the reasons why eight million dollars is being lavished on the film, the brainchild of producer Andrew Gaty. He wrote the script with Steve De Souza, and had little trouble (for once) with Australian Equity by signing up "foreigners" Alan Arkin as Cap and Christopher Lee (like, who else?) as Midnight.

On paper alone, that looks fair enough. Lee, certainly, is a safe bet, whether he's playing Midnight straight or satirically. My worry about the venture is Alan Arkin. He is an excellent actor, and is superbly adept at comedy, but... cold. There's always a lack of warmth to his comedy. Well, all right, not always (he was terrific in *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming* (1966) and Mike Nichols' *Catch 22* (1970); he does, though, in an odd sense, appear to take his comedy too seriously. He has no charisma, unless his chosen character does; a straight Gene Wilder, if you will.

His computer-brain babbling sequence is reminiscent to some of his scenes in *Simon*—which was the comedy version of *Altered*





different faces and voices.

At 48, he has played just about everything. From the killer chasing a blind Audrey Hepburn in Terence Young's *Wait Until Dark* (1967), the deaf-mute in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1968), which netted him the first of his two Oscar nominations. He was a Puerto Rican widower stuck with two kids in *Papi* (1969), Jimmy Caan's cop partner in *Freddie and the Bean* (1974), which later inspired a short-lived tv series, and Peter Falk's sidekick in *The In-Laws* (1976). He even played Sigmund Freud (Alec Guinness' next film role) in *The Seven Per Cent Solution* (1976).

Once again, the Arkin visage has undergone a radical change, as *Captain Invincible*. His wig comes complete with greying sideburns . . . and a Chris Reeve kiss-curl hanging over his forehead.

Another gift he shared with Sellers was his lightning expertise in improvisation—born when a member of The Second City satire group in Chicago. (He joined them after leaving his folk-singing group, The Tarriers. Remember the Tarriers . . . anyone?). No wonder, then, that Arkin is the only actor, other than Sellers, to have played *Inspector Clouseau* (1968).

Arkin has directed on stage and on screen and the chances that he takes are proved by a list of some twenty movies—yet maybe as few as seven hits. Indeed he made a couple of outright disasters (*Rafferty and the Gold Dust Twins*, 1975, and *The Magician of Lublin*, 1979, which was the last time one of his characters tried to fly). And there's one film in his list, *Deadhead Miles*, that never saw the light of day at all. In fact, it's true to say his most classic perfoed, in tv-movies such as the memorable *Defection of Simas Kudirka* (1978) with Donald Pleasence.

"I prefer not be called a comic," he once told me. "First of all because this was not my





Top: *The Captain* (Alan Arkin) takes a dizzy spell at Patty's (Kate Fitzpatrick) flat. She helps him to sit down. Above: *The Captain's* amazing computer brain jams and he begins to talk twenty to the dozen. He tries to jolt his circuits free with a telephone directory, while the head of the FBI (Hayes Gordon) stares incredulously.

particular leaning to begin with. I've studied acting seriously. I'm not the clown who wants to be Hamlet or anything like that, I just think that regarding oneself as a comic means that one's primary obligation is to get laughs. I consider myself an actor, so I'm then obligated to move the audience in whatever way the script designates. If laughs are called for, that's what I do. If not, then not. I just kinda fell into comedy—and I love it, sure. But I don't want to do that exclusively.

"I prepare for a role in a strange way. I don't read the script very many times. I don't consciously think about it. I just find it stays in my mind all the time until I get locked onto an image of the person I'm supposed to be. If that doesn't happen, I consider myself in deep trouble, but usually it means the character doesn't know who he is."

Arkin's wife, Barbara Dana, is an actress, so is his son, Adam, and between movies and stage directing, Arkin makes record albums for children, writes kids' books, and has lately finished a children's musical (he is very

musically minded; why do you think *Simon* played a saxophone?) He's also ferretting out more scripts for his company to make like *The In-Laws*.

"It's hard for me to do nothing," he told me. "I don't do nothing very well."

Apart from Arkin and Lee, the rest of the *Captain Invincible* cast is wholly Australian, including Bill Hunter (from *Newsfront*), John Bluthal, back home after years in British tv comedies, Graham Kennedy (*Don's Party*) is the Australian Prime Minister and producer Michael Pate (one of the first down-under actors to make it in Hollywood, after Errol Flynn, and long since back home producing movies) is the occupant of the White House.

Philippe Mora, who made *Mad Dog Morgan* with Dennis Hopper down-under, directs the super-satire; his first assignment back home since being the first Australian to direct for a major Hollywood studio (*The Beast Within*).

Lance Reynolds, manager of the Aussie pop group, Air Supply) is co-ordinating the

film's music—about ten songs in all covering the spectrum from C&W to rock.

And at last count, the Supie send-up's script had a total of 178 special effects. Technicians have been busy for months (before and after the November 23 opening day of shooting) at the huge Seven Keys studio in Rozelle, Sydney, working on such bizarre effects as... a kangaroo attack... and bits of New York floating out to sea.

Alan Arkin's Cap flies (with Kate Fitzpatrick on his back) with the aid of the *Superman* front projection system—though publicist Sherry Stumm tells me that the technique "has been further improved so that Arkin flies even more naturally than other airborne heroes before him."

Oh yes, and there's another stand-out effects sequence. When Captain Invincible, on *Midnight's* trail investigates a shop and is attacked assaulted by an army of... vacuum cleaners?



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